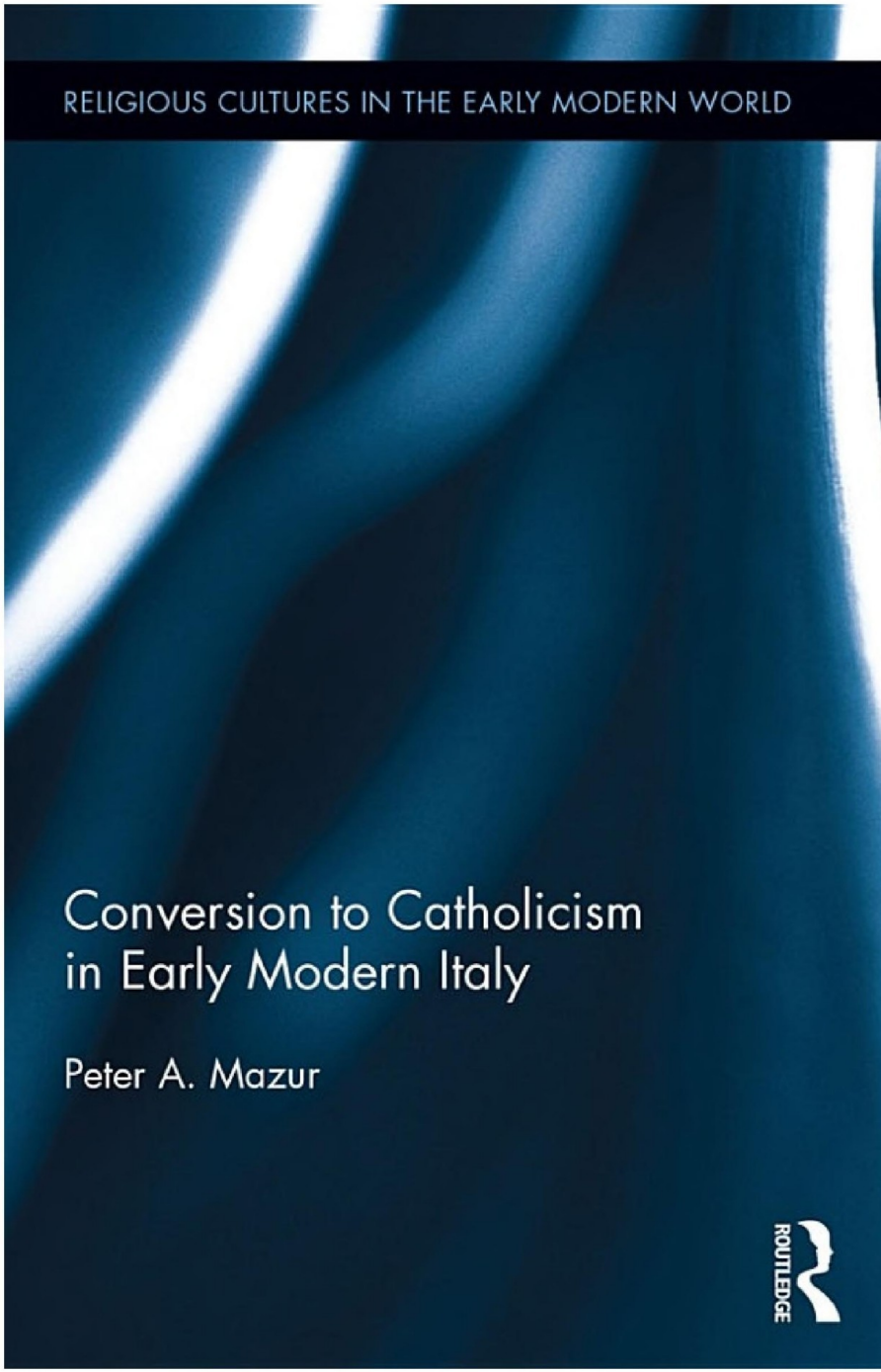
RELIGIOUS CULTURES IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD
Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy
Peter A. Mazur
ROUTLEDGE

VISIT...

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Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conversion took on a new importance within the Catholic world, as its leaders faced the challenge of expanding the church's reach to new peoples and continents, while at the same time reinforcing its authority in the Old World. Based on new archival research, this book details the extraordinary stories of converts who embraced a new religious identity in a territory where papal authority and Catholic orthodoxy were arguably at their strongest: the Italian peninsula. Through an analysis of both the unique strategies employed by clerics to attract and educate converts and the biographies of the men and women—soldiers, aristocrats, and charlatans—who negotiated new positions for themselves in Rome and the other cities of the peninsula, a new image of Italy during the Counter-Reformation emerges: a place where repression and toleration alternated in unexpected ways, leaving room for negotiation and exchange with members of rival faiths.

Peter A. Mazur is a historian of Italy and Mediterranean in the early modern period who has held academic positions at Northwestern University and at the University of York (UK) and lectured widely at universities in the United States, England, and Italy. He is the author of *The New Christians of Spanish Naples: A Fragile Élite, 1527–1661* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and numerous articles on the history of religious minorities and religious intolerance in the Italian Counter-Reformation. He is a fellow of the American Academy in Rome.

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Abbreviations

ACDF	Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Vatican City
ACOR	Archivio della Congregazione dell'Oratorio, Rome
ASDM	Archivio Storico Diocesano di Milano, Milan
ASDMa	Archivio Storico Diocesano di Mantova, Mantua
ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Florence
ASM	Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua
ASPF	Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Rome
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City
AVL	Archivio Vescovile Lunense, Sarzana
BAM	Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City
DBI	*Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 81 vols (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–2014).
DSI	*Dizionario Storico dell'Inquisizione*. ed. A. Prosperi, V. Lavenia, and J. Tedeschi, 4 vols (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2010).

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I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandmother, Shirley Akawie.

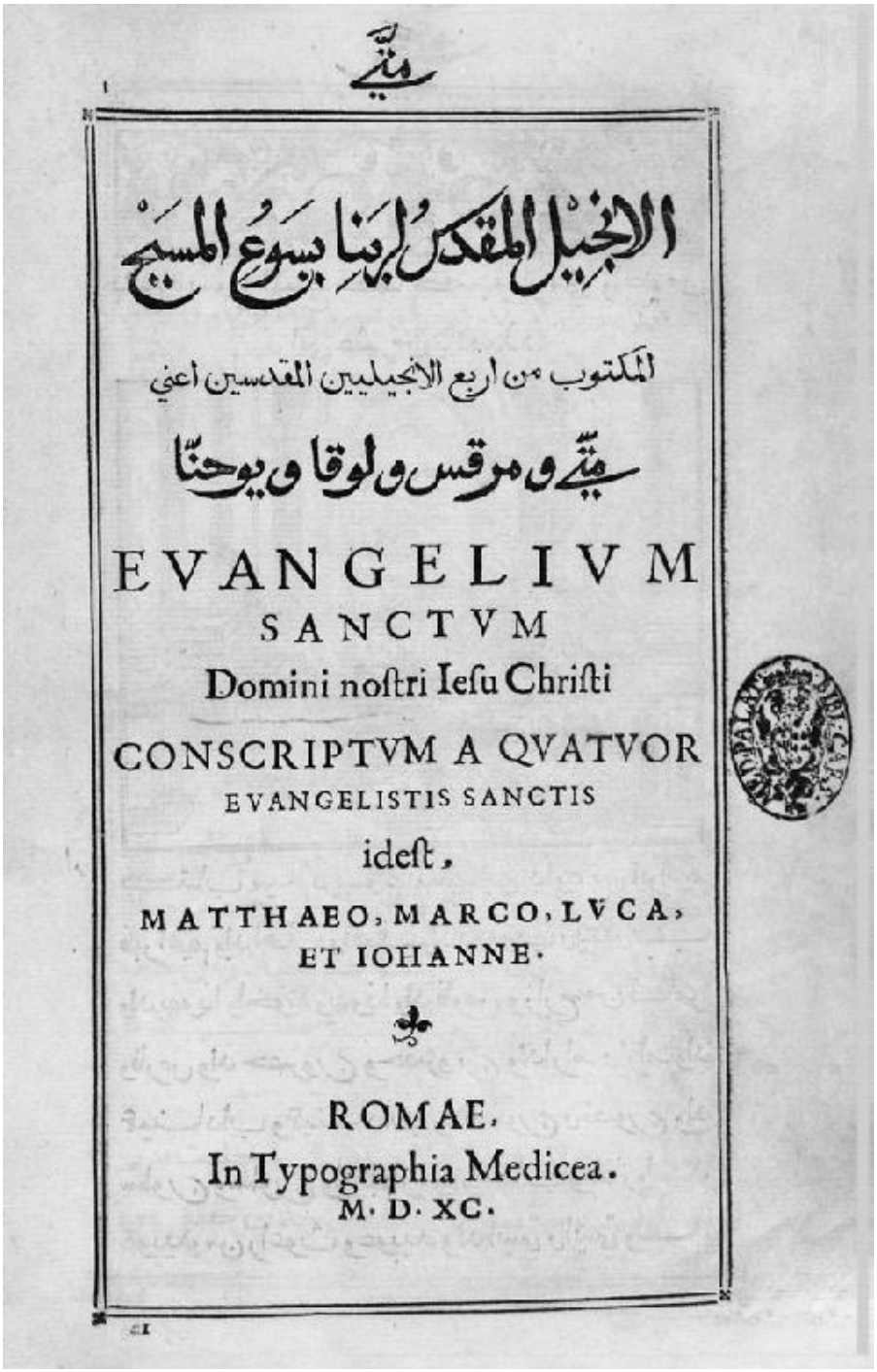
Introduction

In 1637, two petitions arrived before the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome, the part of the papal curia responsible for directing the missions of the church. Both were written on behalf of Giuseppe del Carmine, a Persian from the city of 'Tetrys' (Tabriz), twenty-five years of age, 'a well-born and rich person in his country'. As a Muslim, he had earned a reputation for piety and an upright way of life: after joining a dervish order, he had given his worldly goods to the poor and made the hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca and Medina, where he 'passed his days in prayer before the tomb of Mohammed'. Then, three times, as he lay between waking and sleep, he had seen a figure with a cross and a book who instructed him to go into Christendom and become a Christian. He obeyed, and with the assistance of fra Basilio, a Carmelite missionary in Basra, he had undergone baptism and then travelled to Rome in the friar's company 'in order to be better instructed in the things of our faith'. He now requested to be admitted to the College of Neophytes, a seminary for converts in the city, so that he could return home as a missionary.[1]

We can only speculate at the nature of the events that led to this encounter. As a Persian, Giuseppe had found himself at the time of his baptism in a place that lay along the border between two of the great early modern empires—the Safavid and Ottoman—and conversion might have provided a way to remove himself from this simmering geopolitical conflict. Basra, a commercial port near the edge of the Persian gulf that attracted merchants from both East and West, might have opened his eyes to new and intriguing forms of religious experience to which he had not previously been exposed; in addition to the Muslim majority and the Carmelite missionaries, the city played host to Portuguese, Dutch, Indian, and Armenian traders, and there were active Jewish communities, as well as members of a gnostic sect, the Mandeans, who worshiped John the Baptist.[2] And there may have also been other events, hidden to history and omitted from his account, that contributed to his decision to abandon the beliefs and identity that he had cultivated since birth.

Del Carmine's story calls to mind the category of historical characters that the Italian historian Edoardo Grendi called 'normal exceptions', ordinary individuals whose lives took place in the shadow of the grand historical narrative of great men and epoch-making events, but which by the accident of

being written down provide access to experiences and ways of life that were once common but now largely hidden from sight.[3] Of the many men and women who travelled the enormous distance between Mesopotamia and the Italian peninsula, the relatively few who abandoned one religious identity for another, and of the exceedingly few who had visited both the Ka'aba in Mecca and St Peter's basilica over the course of their lives, Giuseppe del Carmine is one of the only ones whose memory has survived to the present day, conserved in two fraying sheets of paper.


متى

الانجيل المقدس لربنا يسوع المسيح

المكتوب من اربع الانجيليين المقدسين اعني

متى و مرقس و لوقا و يوحنا

EVANGELIVM
SANCTVM
Domini noſtri Ieſu Chriſti
CONSCRIPTVM A QVATVOR
EVANGELISTIS SANCTIS
ideſt,
MATTHAEO, MARCO, LVCA,
ET IOHANNE.

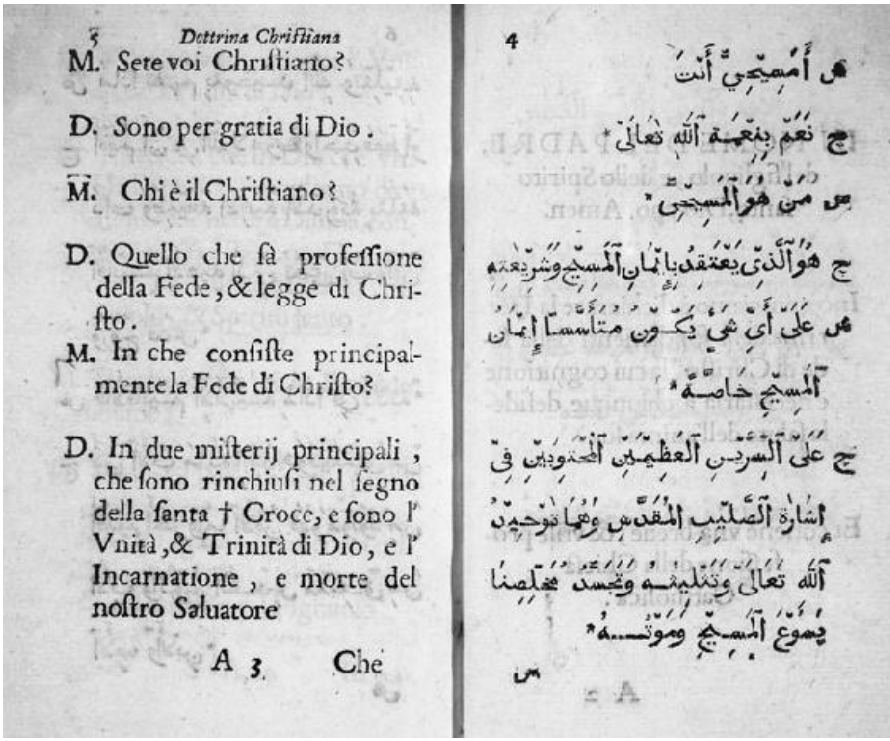
ROMAE.
In Typographia Medicea.
M. D. XC.

Figure I.1 Frontispiece of the edition of the New Testament in Arabic, published by the Medici Arabic Press in Rome, 1590 (photo courtesy of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Florence)

After this brief appearance, as far as we can tell, our dervish disappears

from the historical record entirely. A note written on his petition indicates that the congregation granted his request, and he must have been subsequently admitted to the College of Neophytes, where together with other recent converts from Judaism and Islam he would have been taught Latin and probably Italian, along with the basic education in theology and ecclesiastical administration provided to priests in seminaries across Europe.[4] Though the study of the Persian language in Europe was in its infancy, there were already materials in Arabic explaining the Bible and Christian doctrine available in Rome, including the illustrated editions of the Bible produced by the Medici typography (Figure 1) or the Arabic catechism (Figure 2) that would soon be published by the congregation. He would have depended on the assistance of patrons and protectors to guide him in an unfamiliar world, and he must have relied on members of the Carmelite order, such as fra Basilio, who knew his native tongue and the part of the world where he had been born. He may have also encountered other inhabitants of the city with whom he shared customs and tastes and experiences, such as the great Arabist and biblical scholar Ibrahim al-Haliqani (1605–1664), a Maronite Christian known in the west as Abraham Ecchellensis, who had arrived in Rome the year before, or the Roman aristocrat Pietro Della Valle (1586–1652), whose accounts of his voyages to the Middle East, Persia, and India were later to become a key source of information about the region for European scholars and travellers.[5]

We can speculate further about the contrasts and ironies that our convert might have noted as he travelled around the Eternal City—not only the profound identification of the city with Christianity and the papacy but also the church's impulse to contrast its own claims to salvation and truth with negative images of its rivals. He might have noticed the ways in which the members of the city's Jewish minority were forced to participate in ritual displays of their own subjugated status in an annual homage to the pope underneath the arch of Titus and in ritual taunting of Jews by the Roman populace during carnival. He may have witnessed similar processions celebrating victories over the Turk that portrayed even the most minor conquests by the Catholic powers in the Mediterranean as symbols of divine favour that foretold their impending victory.[6]


5 Dottrina Christiana

M. Sete voi Christiano?

D. Sono per gratia di Dio.

M. Chi è il Christiano?

D. Quello che fà professione della Fede, & legge di Christo.

M. In che consiste principalmente la Fede di Christo?

D. In due misterij principali, che sono rinchiusi nel segno della santa † Croce, e sono l' Vnità, & Trinità di Dio, e l' Incarnatione, e morte del nostro Saluatore

A 3 Che

4

س أَمَسِيحِيٌّ أَنْتَ

ج نَعَمْ بِنِعْمَةِ ٱللهِ تَعَالَى

س مَنْ هُوَ ٱلْمَسِيحِيُّ

ج هُوَ ٱلَّذِي يَعْتَقِدُ بِإِيمَانِ ٱلْمَسِيحِ وَشَرِيعَتِهِ

س عَلَى أَيِّ شَيْءٍ يَكُونُ مُتَأَسِّسًا إِيمَانُ ٱلْمَسِيحِ خَاصَّةً

ج عَلَى ٱلسِّرَّيْنِ ٱلْعَظِيمَيْنِ ٱلْمَخْزُونَيْنِ فِي إِشَارَةِ ٱلصَّلِيبِ ٱلْمُقَدَّسِ وَهُمَا تَوْحِيدُ ٱللهِ تَعَالَى وَتَثْلِيثُهُ وَتَجَسُّدُ مُخَلِّصِنَا يَسُوعَ ٱلْمَسِيحِ وَمَوْتُهُ

س

A

Figure I.2 Facing pages of Italian and Arabic dialogue, from the Arabic catechism published by the polyglot press of Propaganda Fide, 1642 (photo courtesy of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Florence)

Even more tantalizing is the possibility that some other documents exist, whether a scrap of paper or an entire sheaf of letters in some other archive in Rome, Madrid, or Lisbon, that would shed further light on the life of this unusual and well-travelled personality. Men such as Giuseppe del Carmine tend to disappear from the documentary record as quickly as they enter it, sometimes returning to the surface in an entirely different place, perhaps under a different name, or with a new religious identity, profession, or place of origin —their multiple masks and disguises seemingly intended to deceive the seventeenth-century bureaucrat and the modern researcher in equal measure.

* * *

Conversions, collective and individual, forced and spontaneous, had been a feature of Christian society from its earliest origins. Some of the most powerful archetypes available in the Bible and in the history of the church were of converts, who as examples of total and uncompromising self-sacrifice served as models for ordinary believers and vivid demonstrators of the truth and universality of the Christian message. Conversion was continually evoked both

as a literary trope and as a religious ideal in the Latin West, present in the repertoire of saints' lives and devotional literature which proliferated in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages and a powerful symbol in every phase of the gradual conquest of the European continent by the Latin and Orthodox churches over the course of the Middle Ages.[7]

Yet nothing in this past foreshadowed the centrality of conversion to the history of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period when the challenges of the Protestant Reformations, European colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, and the rise of the Ottoman Empire and its client kingdoms in the Mediterranean placed the church in myriad ways before the task of understanding and attempting to assimilate religious difference, of communicating and adapting its message to new languages and cultures. These are themes that have enriched the historiography of the early modern period immensely, highlighting the role of religion in the expansion of European societies into the most remote corners of the globe, often in collaboration and sometimes in conflict with the imperial projects of the European states and the mercantile networks that developed alongside them.

What is more, during this period, a whole new series of documentary records appears, by-products of the new bureaucracies that were expanding into previously independent realms of early modern societies, which provide new ways of accessing and understanding these personal histories. Before the sixteenth century, there may well have been individuals like David, a Jew from Frankfurt who became an Anabaptist in Cologne, fought in von Mansfeld's army in the Thirty Years' War, and was later baptized into the Catholic Church in Pisa in 1627, but their experiences were only recorded in extraordinary circumstances, never as a matter of routine.[8] Instead, by the time he was brought before the inquisitorial court in Livorno, his face red and pockmarked from alcoholism, the archives of the various bureaucracies of church and state had quietly stacked up hundreds if not thousands of dossiers that illustrated lives such as David's, each one unique in its basic elements but all of them detailing some of the many factors that divided religious communities from one another and the often high cost of passing between them.[9]

At the same time, the expansion of the market for printed books and the growing intensity of religious polemics gave rise to a whole subgenre of published conversion narratives, often but not always written in the first person and inevitably intended to discredit the subject's former co-religionists.[10] Stories of conversion, including those of converts who migrated back and forth multiple times, were issued in numerous editions and appealed to all varieties of religious and literary taste. While professors in the contentious world of German academia filled pages with dense Latin

theological arguments, in an endless restaging of the debates between Luther and Eck leading up to the Diet of Worms, others emphasized the human drama and unpredictable hand of fate (or providence) in leading their protagonists into error or towards salvation; for some authors, conversions were simply an appealing subject matter for readers in search of lurid plot lines in exotic settings, from the Genevan consistory to the souks of the Maghreb.

Records of both types have recently been taken up by historians who have analysed in compelling detail the vast distances travelled by converts, their adaptations to the many local religious and cultural norms of the different societies to which they belonged, and the strategies that they pursued in order to resolve the personal and familial crises that often led to conversions.[11] These studies have added a much-needed element of individual experience into our understanding of the religious history of Europe in the early modern period, allowing us to reconsider themes as varied as gender relations, religious tolerance, political and cultural boundaries and the men and women who mediated between them. Broadly speaking, they have also gone a long way to restoring a sense of individual agency to the monolithic categories often used to characterize the period of the Reformation and its aftermath. Yet the strength of these studies also points to their limitations. Microhistories often raise questions that are beyond the scope of their evidence to answer, leaving their readers to wonder what was in fact 'normal' and 'exceptional' in these experiences of conversion. And as a consequence, it is often difficult to draw any larger conclusions about their significance for understanding the religious culture of European societies in the early modern period.

The changing masks that converts wore also present an obstacle to generalizing their experiences or extrapolating their lives into larger patterns. Nevertheless, the value of microhistorical studies should not allow scholarship to ignore the connections between these ephemeral, complex, and ambiguous personalities and the larger historical processes which surrounded them and of which they were a part. Nor should the methodological complexities of studying narratives of conversion lead us to abandon the attempt to understand their connections to larger historical problems, leaving the overarching concepts which scholars employ to describe religious life in early modern Europe immune and untouched by evidence that complicates or calls into question their basic premises.

The following is a study of the institutions that governed conversion in early modern Italy and the social practices that developed alongside them; it combines the findings and insights of existing research on individual conversions and local institutions with new archival material into a broader account of the contexts in which the stories of men (and women) such as Giuseppe del Carmine and the Jewish Anabaptist David occurred.[12] Given the

abundance of relevant source material, it is inevitably an incomplete, partial one, yet by posing the following questions, it suggests some of the possible connections between the microhistory of individual lives and the policies and institutions that governed them: What was the nature of the relationship between converts and the societies that they joined? What were the institutions that oversaw conversion in the early modern world? What was the nature of the instruction or assistance they provided to converts, and how did it influence their subsequent lives? What kinds of resources—social, economic, and political—could new converts depend on, and how did the social and religious context they encountered influence their choices?

By reconstructing the relationship between converts and the sets of legal frameworks, institutions, and social practices that they encountered when joining a new religion, some of the continuities between the apparently disparate and incommensurable experiences of individuals and the overarching concepts which historians often employ to describe the large-scale changes in religious life in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, terms such as confessionalization, social discipline, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation, can be understood on a more precise and realistic scale. Conversions were one of the areas in which the rhetoric of religious intolerance and the supposedly impenetrable boundaries between doctrines and religious communities were tested and renegotiated.

By necessity, I have chosen to limit my investigation to a single area in a distinct period of time: the Italian peninsula between the end of the Council of Trent and the eighteenth century. Though politically fragmented, Italy was united in this period by an unprecedented attempt to centralize and regulate religious life, and even the most remote cities in the peninsula were affected by the introduction of new institutions and practices that were to prove a lasting part of their cultural and religious life: Jesuit colleges, seminaries, new confraternities, and a range of episcopal and papal courts that targeted offences among both clergy and laity. At no other time was the church's presence in Italian life as noticeable, and its hegemony over cultural, intellectual, and political life as complete.

For the purposes of this book, two of these new institutions stand out for their particular interest in converts and the innovative policies they developed to attract them: the tribunal of the Roman Inquisition, which claimed a vast and exclusive jurisdiction over a range of religious offences from its foundation in 1542 until the suppression of its local branches in the mid-eighteenth century, and the institutes of conversion that aimed to provide instruction and material assistance to converts and connect them with networks of Catholic friends and patrons who could offer further support. The documents upon which the original research in this book is based are drawn almost exclusively

from the records of these two formidable bureaucracies, a choice which allows us to focus resolutely on how a series of policies who were new to the Counter-Reformation and specific to the Italian peninsula began to function and develop over this crucial period. Necessarily, other pertinent subjects, events, and personalities are granted less space than they might have been in other accounts. There is relatively little here, for example, about the extensive efforts of the church both inside Italy and beyond to persuade members of the Greek and Eastern churches to recognize papal supremacy and adopt the Latin rite or about closely related themes, such as the history of the Mediterranean slave trade, which was based on the shared principle that members of a rival faith could be kidnapped and enslaved and which often led to the conversion of its victims.[13]

Italy's geographic position was also important: the peninsula stood along two of the most contentious religious and political borders in the early modern world—between a Habsburg-dominated Western Mediterranean and an eastern one under Ottoman control, and on one side of the Alps, at a short distance from the Protestant capitals of Geneva, Zurich, and Basel. While both the Italian states and the church attempted to make the peninsula into an invincible bulwark, these borders were in fact porous, and numerous travellers came to the peninsula, both legally and illegally, following well-worn commercial routes that were never entirely shut down out of a curiosity to see the remnants of the classical and Christian past or in flight from relatives, creditors, or magistrates.

For these reasons, the history of conversion in Italy during the period in question is something of more than marginal significance in what was a largely confessionalized society. The new strategies and institutions developed by the Roman curia, the religious orders, and bishops to convert members of religious minorities in the largest urban centres of the peninsula were intended not only to solve local problems, but to provide solutions that could be applied in the rest of the Catholic world, and many of the policies developed in Rome were adopted in other places. Furthermore, because of the symbolic importance of Rome and Italy throughout the world, the conversions that took place there—of former Rabbis, Calvinist renegades, and Muslim princes—acquired an importance that belied their small numbers for the role that they played in Catholic propaganda. Legions of clergymen re-told the stories of conversion in ways that emphasized their resonance with the timeless values of the church and used the official publishers of the papacy—the presses of the Vatican and Propaganda Fide founded in 1587 and 1626, respectively—to spread news of these dramatic lives across the globe, often in multiple translations.

* * *

The first two chapters of the book provide, for the first time in any language, an account of the foundation and spread of the local institutes of conversion in Italy, beginning with the Roman Casa dei Catecumeni in 1543 and concluding with the lesser-known institute for German pilgrims founded by a retired Florentine *castrato* opera singer in 1686. The archives of several of these institutes (including the Milan ospizio and the Casa dei Catecumeni in Mantua) had not previously been explored, and one of the aims of this section is to introduce this significant new data to the overall picture. Yet more importantly, by drawing together specific information on the local contexts into a systematic narrative of the foundations of the institutes of conversion and comparison of their regulations and practices, these chapters provide a comprehensive description of the development of these institutions and their interactions with the converts they hosted.

The main characteristics of this program of conversion were closely linked to the general attitudes of Roman ecclesiastical élites towards religious minorities, grounded in centuries of controversy but adapted to the challenges of the period. Ecclesiastical élites in Counter-Reformation Italy made a clear distinction drawn between Jews and Muslims, who had to undergo the initiatory sacrament of baptism in order to be admitted to the church, and Protestants, who were faced with an inquisitorial procedure that turned on the recognition and repudiation of past errors and return to the true faith, even if they had been born into an evangelical community. These two types of conversion required very different approaches, and while at first the church only saw fit to establish institutions for the education and assistance of Jewish and Muslim converts, it eventually adapted this model for Protestants as well, establishing a network of houses in the major cities of Northern Italy that provided material aid to converts, access to religious instruction, and removed the stigma of punishment and public shame from the process of joining or rejoining the Catholic Church. Both the catechumen houses and the hospices for 'northerners' or *oltramontani* (a more ambiguous and delicate term that slowly replaced 'heretics') were essentially charitable institutions, sustained by private donations and operated by members of the clergy who provided food and shelter to converts but more importantly gave them education in the basic elements of Catholicism, preparation for formal entry into the new religion (baptism for Jews and Muslims and abjuration for Protestants), and help to find the necessary patrons and professional contacts to ensure that they would remain stable in their new religious identities and fully assimilate into Italian society.

The thousands of men and women who spent time in the institutes came

from across the globe and in every imaginable combination of religious and ethnic identity. Some were members of long-standing minority communities living in the peninsula; many were brought to it by some of the forces at work during what has been described as the 'first globalization': European colonization, an expanding mercantile economy which brought goods and people into more frequent contact; diplomacy and the Republic of Letters, which stimulated the creation of new relationships between élites across linguistic and national borders; and more prosaically, warfare and slavery.[14]

The process of instructing and assimilating the thousands of converts who passed through the institutes was fraught with challenges of a theological nature, but the main role of the institute was one of social mediation. As experience taught, the resolution of all of the most pressing questions surrounding individual conversions was predicated on the convert's ability to find a stable place in society: in some cases, this meant nothing more than basic necessities, such as food and clothing, while in others it involved creating the proper network of patrons and acquaintances who could guarantee their survival and relative prosperity in Italian society. More than profound spiritual transformation, what chiefly preoccupied the men and women responsible for the care of converts was re-establishing a social world and preventing or minimizing contacts with those on the opposite side of the confessional divide.

As a result, much of their activity represented a negotiation between converts who could bargain as relative equals with members of the clergy ranging from parish priests and confessors to bishops and cardinals. In practice, the institutes were characterized by a paternalistic attitude towards those members of rival faiths and a realistic understanding of the necessary economic and social premises for conversion, together with an awareness of the many gaps in the seemingly impassable confessional borders that had sprung up all over Europe in the sixteenth century. A subtle kind of pragmatism reigned within the walls of Italy's institutes of conversion; one which granted converts plenty of room for negotiation and often forced their patrons and teachers to concede a great deal in exchange for the possibility of gaining a lasting adherent to the Catholic faith.

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While the first section of the book concentrates on what might be described as the infrastructure of conversion, the second moves back towards the micro-scale and explores several case histories through a close reading of the biographies of converts. In these stories, the myths of conversion propagated by the church can be compared to the social and political contexts in which men and women changed their identities, restoring some sense of the range of

choices available to converts and their active participation in the crafting of narratives about themselves. While many converts and their contemporaries were anxious to view their histories as driven uniquely by the force of divine providence, and many historians today are equally anxious to depict them as mere pawns of confessional politics, curial factions, and aristocratic protectors, the lives of converts were in fact full of complex choices of identity, loyalty, and ideology, and their biographies provide plenty of insight into the way categories that have long been part of discussion of religion in early modern Europe were understood and practiced by those who lived in the period and found themselves at the centre of some of its fiercest controversies.

In the life of Alessandro Franceschi, a rabbi's son turned Dominican friar, inquisitor, and confidant to pope Clement VIII, many of the contradictions and prejudices, both positive and negative, surrounding converts from Judaism were laid bare. Though he was given an excellent education and launched on a stellar career in the Roman curia by a series of powerful protectors, Franceschi found that his identity as a convert was ultimately a liability when he attempted to rise to the highest levels of the papal bureaucracy. While his value as a symbol of Christian redemption and the defeat of Jewish 'obstinacy' granted him a position of visibility and influence as a preacher, diplomat, and theologian, his bid to become a cardinal at the end of the sixteenth century met with failure. This was only one of the ambiguities of a figure whose personality can be glimpsed through the few writings he left behind and the many observations made about him by others: a zealous convert who punished apostates and Jews as harshly as any other inquisitor but who nevertheless proudly declared his membership in the 'Hebrew nation'.

The contradictions that underlay Franceschi's life can also be seen in the story of another convert and friar who had much in common with him but ultimately followed a very different path: Niccolò Maria Orlandini, a convert from Judaism who during the mid-seventeenth century travelled throughout Central Italy delivering firebrand sermons against Jews and making numerous and successful efforts to convert his former co-religionists, including relatives. He might have expected to be remembered as a typical righteous convert who had completed a full transformation, but an inquisitorial investigation opened when he was in his forties revealed that he had conducted a double life: preaching against Jews but also seducing women who came to him for confession and exhorting them to abandon Catholicism and become Jews.

Chapter 4 tells the story of a Swiss convert whose conversion was no less troubling for observers on both sides of the Protestant-Catholic divide. Born in Zurich to a family of Calvinist ministers, Johann Heinrich Ruegg found himself as a young man in one of Rome's most important seminaries after a dramatic conversion that separated him from his family and the community in which he

had grown up. Yet it was not to be the last time he made such a dramatic reversal; over the course of several years, Ruegg made multiple incursions back and forth across the Alps, renouncing and then reclaiming his Catholic identity before a series of incredulous religious and civil authorities. Ruegg's last escape ended at the Swiss border in a manhunt involving the combined forces of inquisitors and papal nuncios across Italy, and he returned to Rome, where he began an extended negotiation with the congregations of the Holy Office and Propaganda Fide over his case.

The section concludes with the stories of northern soldiers who were stationed in the garrisons of Northern Italy in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Usually poorly educated, destitute, and knowing little Italian, they arrived before Italy's missionaries and inquisitors after long and itinerant lives had taken them across Europe, with few evident social ties outside of their military companions and few obvious prospects for life in Italy. And as a result, they were often made subject to long inquiries about their past lives that sometimes revealed disturbing inconsistencies and deceptions, raising the question of whether it was possible to construct new beginnings for men whose former lives appeared to be rootless and without clear points of reference. The narratives of soldiers add another layer to the problem of the relationship between dissimulation, assimilation, and autobiographical narrative outlined in the earlier chapters, as well as introducing a social category that became increasingly common in Italian cities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Taken together, these stories illustrate some important aspects of conversion that are less evident in the institutional history described in chapters 1 and 2. On the one hand, they highlight the intrinsic ambiguity of converts' behaviour and their reliance on elaborate strategies of self-fashioning and rhetorical posturing as they moved within Catholic society, whether rural or urban, ecclesiastical or lay, aristocratic or peasant. In contrast to the optimistic claims of apologists, there was no such thing as a definitive or unequivocal adhesion to a new faith; reversals, regrets, and attempts to reconcile with one's previous religious identity were commonplace and inevitable features of these personal histories. Most of the converts described in the second half of the book, whether knowingly or not, tested or redefined in some way the boundaries of appropriate behaviour for a convert within the Catholic world, and most also encountered the opposition of organized groups within the church that saw them as threats to established interests or ideals.

By the same token, they also show that converts' assimilation into the religious and social mainstream depended heavily on the formation and stabilization of new bonds of affinity and protection with other converts, men and women, who came from the same place and spoke the same language but

above all with clergy, aristocrats, and officials who could provide protection and a source of livelihood. Perhaps most importantly, these protectors and mediators helped to craft official versions of converts' biographies that allowed them to establish a dignified position in Catholic society and advance their own interests and those of their patrons in the crowded arena of Italian ecclesiastical politics.

In sum, far from being perpetual outsiders in a rigidly defined and immovable religious organization, converts were active participants in defining its message and composition, even if they did so from a position of relative weakness. And just as other genres of narrative were often co-opted in debates over a range of theological and political questions, converts and their lives proved especially fertile material for late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholic intellectuals to 'think with', and converts themselves were all too willing to participate in this process and attempt to reap benefits from it.[15]

* * *

In different ways, each of the chapters in this book offer a critique of what remains, despite the many qualifications and corrections that have emerged since it was first theorized, of the dominant narrative of religion and modernization in the historiography of early modern Europe. Since the confessionalization thesis was first propounded by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling in the 1970s and '80s, it has become axiomatic that the Christian churches in Europe worked hand in hand with the state towards the construction of a disciplined society in which the ideology of religion and the practices of interior and external control that it promoted were wedded to the military might, bureaucratic organization, and legitimacy of the state in order to produce societies that conformed more closely to the ethical precepts of the Christian traditions than ever before.[16]

Confessionalization provides an all-encompassing narrative of European modernity, in the tradition of such critics of liberal historical certainties as Gerhard Oestreich and Michel Foucault. It grants the religious reformers of the sixteenth century a central role in the transition from the Middle Ages to the dawn of the French Revolution, bearers of a decidedly negative modernity made up of surveillance and coercion, the imposition of codes of behaviour and rigid hierarchies in intellectual life, and civil and ecclesiastical bureaucracies that spread their tentacles into every corner of society, but one which nevertheless contributed to the creation of modern states and the particularly European model of separation of church and state.[17]

Certainly, there is much in this book which lends support to this reading of history. The institutes of conversion, with their careful regulations, obsessive

attention to the behaviour of the converts even after they had left, and rigid doctrinal distinctions, fit comfortably into it. So too does the effort to standardize practices according to models developed within the Roman curia and create a network of institutes that covered nearly every corner of Northern and Central Italy. The church's sophisticated attempts to transform individual cases of conversion into vehicles of propaganda to be used both internally and among the 'enemy', translated and distributed far beyond Italy, were also symptomatic of an approach to religious life that fits into the parameters of confessionalization.

However, when we consider the way that these institutes functioned and the evidence that has survived about the lives of converts and the relationships they maintained with their patrons and protectors, a more complex image coalesces. For one thing, the hospices and catechumen houses of Italy were never conceived as repressive or disciplinary institutions. For its own, entirely doctrinal reasons, the church insisted that conversions be made voluntarily and provided a system of rules and incentives that preserved a margin of individual choice. While there existed a number of strong pressures to convert that prevented the inhabitants of the institutes from acting in complete freedom, this remained a legal imperative of surprising consistency across the early modern period, one that continued to be stated as a matter of principle even when it was systematically abused, as in the case of the baptisms *invitis parentibus* discussed in chapter 1. In most cases, conversion was not, and could not, be simply the submission of a single individual to the superior force and organization of a dominant faith.

The same holds true when we turn to the more detailed narratives of the second half of the book. While there was no shortage of violence and intolerance to be found in the lives of the converts who appear there, it was rarely of a kind that can be reduced to a clearly defined policy on the part of an institution or group of power brokers. It was more diffuse, and more episodic than what true confessionalization would have required, and frequently seems to interrupt moments of calm and cooperation. Nor did it necessarily serve to limit the range of choices open to converts. It would be hard to view any of the figures profiled as living in some proto-Weberian steel cage; all of their lives in one way or another were characterized by an unusual ability to recognize the limitations of the institutions of church and state and exploit them for their own purposes.

As a result, the processes of conversion and assimilation of religious minorities have to be distinguished from the more aggressive faces of Catholic reform in the period—the heavy-handed application of inquisitorial justice, censorship of artistic and intellectual life, and the attempts to regulate the sexual habits and familial relationships of ordinary believers.[18] More than

conquering the souls of converts, to borrow from the title of a recent study of Borromeo's Milan, the Italian clergy (including cardinals and inquisitors) bartered, negotiated, and haggled for them in a complex and quintessentially Renaissance game of dissimulation and prudence.[19] No conversion could ever be considered final so long as a convert retained a margin of personal liberty and economic means, and the give and take between ecclesiastical authorities and their charges could often continue for years after they had been formally made into Catholics.

For these reasons, the categories of social discipline and confessionalization in their strongest connotations are inadequate to comprehend the range of approaches to the problem of religious difference and the multiplicity of ways in which it was resolved in early modern Italy. The demarcation of religious borders and confessional groups depended on kinds of exchange and negotiation which rarely appear in traditional accounts of religious conflict in Europe. Beyond the ironclad regulations and doctrinal intolerance, alongside the calls for purification and elimination or marginalization of religious adversaries, there existed all over Europe cracks, holes, and grey zones where conversations took place out of public view, and men and women could pass relatively easily from one religious community to another, acting on personal convictions and desires and not simply obeying the demands of the majority.[20]

Despite the variety of circumstances, personalities, and religious and national origins of the protagonists of these stories, they all allow us a glimpse into the workings of a society that had constructed strict confessional boundaries, both geographic and social, and that kept religious minorities on the margins, but which nevertheless preserved spaces of contact, dialogue, and exchange. Converts who made the decision to cross these borders and seek new habits, beliefs, families, and professions provide a precious view of how the forces that held these boundaries in place operated and let us glimpse how it was possible for newcomers to navigate their way through the cracks and openings. The experience of conversion shows us that the confessionalized societies of Europe were something less than Leviathans and that their leaders possessed imperfect and essentially weak means of coercion, surveillance, and control.

Notes

1 ASPF, SOGC 397, f. 212, f. 219v. On July 20, the congregation approved the request, noting that

> … this mission is of the greatest importance because Basra is a huge city and a stopover for those headed to the Indies and the missionaries in this land when they have converted a Mohammedan they send him to the missionary in Basra, who baptizes him and sends him to the Indies, and it is also important because there are around seven thousand Christians there who are being converted to the Catholic faith.

Ibid., f. 494. H. Chick (ed.) and R. Matthee (updated edn ed.), *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 814–17, identifies fra Basilio as a Portuguese friar born in 1596; after joining the order in 1618, he was sent to Isfahan, where he witnessed the execution of three Muslim converts to Christianity in 1622. He arrived in Basra in 1623, disguised as an Arab.

2 On the city's political role and religious character, wedged between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, see R. Matthee, 'Between Arabs, Turks, and Iranians: The Town of Basra, 1600–1700', *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 69 (2006), pp. 53–78; fra Basilio's projects in the city included a plan to transfer the Mandeans to Hormuz and Muscat, two cities under Portuguese control, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, vol. 1, pp. 324–30.

3 E. Grendi, 'Microanalisi e storia sociale', *Quaderni Storici*, 35 (May–August 1977), p. 512.

4 The students of the *collegio dei neofiti* in 1637 included the twenty-two-year-old 'Ferdinando Persiano' and 'Gioseffo Meneses Indiano', a Brahmin from Goa: ASPF, SOCG 397, f. 453, f. 488.

5 On Ecchellensis and the study of Arabic and Eastern languages within Propaganda Fide, see B. Heyberger (ed.), *Orientalisme, Science, et Controverse: Abraham Ecchellensis (1605–1664)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); G. Pizzorusso, 'I satelliti di Propaganda Fide: il Collegio Urbano e la Tipografia poliglotta. Note di ricerca su due istituzioni culturali romane nel XVII secolo', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée*, 116:2 (2004), pp. 471–98; on the genesis of the Medici typography, see the recent exhibition catalogue edited by S. Fani and M. Farina, *Le vie delle Lettere. La tipografia medicea tra Roma e l'Oriente* (Florence: Mandragora, 2013), and M. Casari, 'Eleven Good Reasons for Learning Arabic in Late Renaissance Italy: A Memorandum by Giovan Battista Raimondi', in M. Israels and L. A. Waldman (eds), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors* (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2013), vol. 2, pp. 545–57.

6 A. Prosperi, 'Incontri Rituali: Il Papa e gli Ebrei' in C. Vivanti (ed.), *Gli Ebrei in Italia*, vol. 11 of *Storia d'Italia, Annali* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 495–520; S. Nanni, 'Figure dell'impero turco nella Roma del Seicento' in B. Heyberger, M. García-Arenal, E. Colombo, and P. Vismara (eds), *L'Islam visto da Occidente. Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all'Islam* (Milan: Marietti, 2009), pp. 187–214.

7 Among the vast number of studies devoted to the history of conversion in the Christian tradition, see K. F. Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992); A. Grafton and K. Mills, *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003); A. Grafton and K. Mills, *Conversion: Old Worlds and New* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

8 The life of David, described in a brief inquisitorial dossier, has been carefully reconstructed by Cesare Santus in his unpublished 'L'ebreo anabattista: Vita di David'. I thank the author for allowing me to read it.

9 In the 'The Hermeneutics of Testimony', Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the double etymology of the word, which derived both from Roman legal and forensic terminology and early Christian hagiography. The autobiographical narratives of early modern converts, which derive in equal parts from both traditions, embody this pairing particularly well. *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 119–55.

10 A. Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale, 2010), pp. 203–72, contains a broad summary of the ways in which the theological controversies of the reformation impacted the market for printed books and the types of literature that consumers sought from it. Conversion narratives in different national and linguistic contexts have been ably explored by K. Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early Modern France* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2005); M. Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996); R. Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading Authority in Medieval Polemic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013) and J. Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013). While the genre in Italian literature has not yet been explored systematically, S. Villani, 'Conversione e famiglia in due testi letterari italiani del seicento', *Studi Storici*, XLIX (2008), pp. 1039–68 provides an analysis of two such texts and the rhetorical strategies they employ.

11 Microhistories of conversion have been especially popular among historians of Italy; an early example is B. Pullan, 'A Ship with Two Rudders: Righetto Marrano and the Venetian Inquisition', *The Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 25–58; more recent ones are K. Siebenhuner, 'Conversion, Mobility and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600', *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 5–35, and E. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2011); on a well-documented case from the Low Countries, see C. Harline, *Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2011). Two recent collections have also focused in detail on case studies of conversion and the methodological problems they pose: H. Hendrix, T. Richardson and L. Stelling (eds), *The Turn of the Soul: Representations of Religious Conversion in Early Modern Art and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2012) and the double issue of the *Journal of Early Modern History* dedicated to 'Conversion Narratives in the Early Modern World', P. Mazur and A. Shinn (eds). See also M. García-Arenal and G. Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds: Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe*, trans. M. Beagles (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2003). Though not directly focused on a conversion, this case study merits attention as well for its careful analysis of the multiple guises assumed by Sephardic Jews in Morocco, Spain, and the Netherlands.

12 The study of the institutional mechanisms of conversion in Italy has largely been carried out on a local scale, for both practical and academic reasons, and has concentrated more on the city of Rome than on many of the other important urban contexts in the peninsula. Rather than attempting to summarize the range of publications on this topic here, I point readers to the works cited in chapters 1 and 2, as well as the bibliography.

13 On the missions to the Byzantine Church and the Italo-Greek communities of Southern Italy see V. Peri, *Chiesa romana e rito greco. G.A. Santoro e la Congregazione dei Greci* (Brescia: Paideia, 1975) and I. Herklotz, *Die Academia Basiliana: Griechische Philologie, Kirchengeschichte und Unionsbemühungen in Rom der Barberini* (Rome: Herder, 2008); on slavery and conversion, see R. C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), G. Fiume, *Schiavitù Mediterranee. Corsari, rinnegati e santi di età moderna* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2009) and L. Rostagno, *Mi faccio turco. Esperienze ed immagini dell'Islam nell'Italia moderna* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1983).

14 In addition to J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), see the more recent works by S. Gruzinski, *Le quatre parties du monde. Histoire d'une mondialisation* (Paris: Éditions de la Martiniere, 2004) and *The Eagle and the Dragon: Globalization and European Dreams of Conquest in China and America in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2014) and J. P. Rubiés, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

15 S. Ditchfield, 'Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009), pp. 552–84.

16 On the historiography of confessionalization, H. Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', in T. A. Brady, H. A. Oberman, and J. D. Tracy (eds), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 641–81; H. Schilling, *Early Modern European Civilization and its Political and Cultural Dynamism: The Menachem Stern Lectures* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2008), as well as the synthesis of German historiography by R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550–1750* (London: Routledge, 1989); the state of the field article by Ute

Lotz-Heumann in A. Bamji, G. Jansen, and M. Laven (eds), *Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 33–53 gives a good summary of the concept and the critiques that have been made of it since its first appearance; finally, regarding its use in the Italian context, see P. Prodi (ed.), *Disciplina dell'anima, disciplina del corpo, e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), as well as many of the subsequent publications of the Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico.

17 See in particular Peter N. Miller's cogent critique of the social discipline paradigm and its connections to the disturbing personal histories and political commitments of its original theorists, 'Nazis and Neostoics: Otto Brunner and Gerhard Oestreich Before and After the Second World War', *Past and Present*, 176 (2002), pp. 144–86.

18 On Catholic regulation of sexuality, see G. Romeo, *Amori Proibiti. I concubini tra Chiesa e Inquisizione, Napoli 1563–1656* (Bari: Laterza, 2008), and F. Alfieri, *Nella camera degli sposi. Tomás Sánchez, il matrimonio, la sessualità (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010).

19 W. de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

20 An exception is Benjamin J. Kaplan's excellent *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Tolerance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2007); characteristically, Schilling's treatment of minorities and religious coexistence focuses heavily on normative description of laws and theological principles, de-emphasizing if not entirely ignoring how these norms were received by non-élites and applied in practice. Schilling, *Early Modern European Civilization*, pp. 33–64.

1 The Catechumen Houses in Italy, 1543–1797

The history of conversion in Counter-Reformation Italy begins with the foundation of a series of institutes which had little if any precedent and which were intended, like many others created by ecclesiastical élites, to regulate and bureaucratize aspects of religious life that had previously been left to the discretion of individual members of the clergy. In the middle decades of the sixteenth century, the members of Roman curia and their collaborators throughout the peninsula began to insist that conversion, like miraculous visions or exorcisms, be subjected to rules that could restrain the dangerous, even anarchic subjectivity that these experiences were capable of unleashing and ensure that they were guided by specially trained members of the clergy at every step. The solution that they devised for this particular problem was the *Casa dei Catecumeni*, or catechumen house, an institute that provided refuge and instruction for converts from Islam and Judaism who were preparing for baptism.

The houses were in theory entirely charitable, as their apologists have long emphasized, but behind this mask of indulgent paternalism lay an institution that sought to oversee and negotiate every aspect of the delicate passage from one faith to another. From the converts' separation from their families to the negotiation of a new place in society as Catholics, to the resolution of unsettled scores and unpaid debts, the catechumen houses became the essential link between converts and the society that surrounded them. Their officials were forbidden to use force or coercion, though they sometimes condoned it, and were expected to certify as far as possible the intentions of the convert before allowing him or her to approach the initiatory sacrament of baptism and join the church. The following chapter traces the development of this institute, from its beginnings in Rome to its imitations in other cities throughout Italy, the alliances between Italian élites and clergy that supported the houses financially, and the debates that divided the administrators of the houses and civil authorities in the Italian states. Over the course of two and a half centuries, the catechumen houses became a common feature of urban life in Northern and Central Italy, guaranteeing a substantial uniformity in the treatment of converts and creating an influential model that was imitated elsewhere in Europe.

* * *

The casa was first conceived in Rome in the midst of debate over the legitimacy and implications of forced conversions, over whether and to what degree baptism without the consent of its recipient could be considered valid. During the same years that the members of the curia began a halting response to the challenges of Luther and Zwingli, they also confronted the no less vexing legacy of the forced baptisms of Jews and Muslims in Spain and Portugal that had reached their apex during the last two decades of the fifteenth century. The effects of this violent past, a restive and unassimilated population of formerly Jewish and Muslim *conversos* and *moriscos*, many of whom continued to practice their former religions, and the forms of social exclusion employed by the population of Old Christians to prevent them from obtaining offices, titles, and professional qualification, most notoriously the statutes of blood purity, or *limpieza de sangre*, had become widespread by the end of the fifteenth century and showed no signs of abating.

For many members of the Roman curia, who viewed these events from afar, the events in the Iberian kingdoms represented an error that was not to be repeated. Paul III (1534–1549), who had become interested in Hebrew learning as a young man and valued the economic contributions of Jews to his territory, offered new privileges to the Jews of Rome and the Papal States and shelter for refugees who continued to arrive from Iberia and from the Kingdom of Naples, from which they had been expelled in 1541. In the halls of the papal palaces, he surrounded himself with critics of the ideology of forced conversion and purity of blood. Among them was Pietro Paolo Parisio (1473–1545), a former professor of law who he named to the College of Cardinals. Parisio was the author of several influential opinions that questioned the legitimacy of the forced baptism of the Portuguese Jews and the principal author of a bull issued by Clement VII that declared the baptisms of the Portuguese New Christians null and void if they had been in any way coerced and offered them temporary protection from the Inquisition.[1] The pope also found a kindred spirit in Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Jesuit order, who had vocally opposed the prevailing tendency to exclude those of Muslim and Jewish heritage from the religious orders and made strong statements in their favour. Not by chance, many of Loyola's closest assistants were themselves New Christians. Among them were his secretary, Juan de Polanco, and his successor as general of the order, Diego Laìnez.[2]

It was in the context of this debate over the Iberian past and its reverberations in the present that Paul crafted two pieces of legislation that were to serve as touchstones for Catholic policy towards Jews and Muslims in the following centuries. The first, *Cupientes Judaeos* (1542), guaranteed

converts rights over their property, prohibited any form of punitive taxation or confiscation following baptism, and granted them a series of fiscal privileges that created an incentive to convert. It also indicated that both before and after baptism priests should 'instruct [neophytes] in the articles of the faith, and in the precepts of the new law and of the rites of the Catholic Church'.[3] The following year, *Illius* provided an even more solid framework for these policies through the foundation of the *Casa dei Catecumeni*, an institute where catechumens, adults born outside of the Christian religion who had chosen to undergo baptism, would be housed, fed, and educated in the basic elements of Christianity.[4]

In a house near the church of San Giovanni in Mercatello, at the base of the Capitoline Hill, Loyola established a small institute for the converts and soon after began to report news of its first guests, which included the son of the pope's physician, who had fled to the East to avoid conversion and recently returned to Rome 'with many saintly desires placed in his heart by the holy spirit'. Though the imperative to provide instruction and charity for converts had been evoked since the beginnings of the church, there are few precedents for an institution with the expressed goal of isolating would-be converts to Catholicism from their families and former religious community and preparing them for baptism.[5]

However, like many policies hatched in the Roman curia, its auspicious beginnings were not to last. After Paul IV came to power in 1555, he reversed many of the policies installed by his predecessor in favour of a more resolutely antagonistic stance towards the Jewish communities of Italy. He expelled the Jews from much of the Papal States, with the exception of Rome and Ancona, and placed the remaining Jews of Rome in a ghetto, a harsh regime of exclusion and highly regulated living that was explicitly justified by the need to humiliate Jews in order to bring them to convert. The Spanish and Portuguese New Christians fared no better. In 1556, the pope ordered an inquisitorial campaign against a group of conversos in Ancona that ended in twenty-five capital sentences: the harshest punishment ever handed down by an ecclesiastical tribunal in Italy, and a clear sign of the pope's view that too little, rather than too much, repression had led to the intolerable situation of unfinished assimilation, apostasy, and social conflict in Iberia.[6]

Though the extreme religious intolerance of Paul IV was never again reached during the course of the early modern papacy, neither was there a complete restoration of the policies enacted by his predecessor, Paul III. Instead, as one pope replaced another, periodic expulsions (under Pius V, 1566–1572 and Clement VIII, 1592–1605) and crackdowns punctuated periods of laxity, amnesty, and return to the status quo. And through all of them, the casa, with its temptations of money and protection, existed alongside the stick

of the ghetto, punitive taxation, and social exclusion in an attempt to convince Jews, who could neither be compelled to convert nor entirely ignored, to embrace the Catholic Church.[7]

* * *

No individual illustrates the protean character of the new institution better than the man who guided it from its beginnings to maturity and transformed the casa into a model to be imitated elsewhere in Italy and throughout the Catholic world. Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto (1514–1585) became cardinal protector of the neophytes and catechumens in 1565, a role that encompassed both judicial authority over converts and financial and social patronage of them; its holders were expected to act as benevolent patriarchs who could correct the errors of their charges and ease their transition from the blindness of Judaism into a new life as Christians.[8] The professor of rhetoric who gave an oration at Sirleto's funeral compared him to Elijah, the Old Testament prophet whose foretelling of the coming of Christ and the abrogation of the Mosaic Law made him a favourite subject of Catholic apologetics.[9]

One of Sirleto's main responsibilities was the stabilization of the finances of the casa, which forced him to search for a steadier source of income than those on which it had relied in the past. While his early correspondence is filled with letters seeking unpaid taxes from Jewish communities and individuals in the Papal States, this later gave way to more a resolute focus on the problems of individual converts themselves. According to Giovanni Botero's *On the Office of the Cardinal*, 'when Gregory XIII saw how ready he was to benefit others, he provided [Sirleto] with large amounts of money, so that he could continue in the honourable exercise of liberality'.[10] Botero was probably referring to the events of 1580, when a miraculous image of the Madonna was discovered in a hayloft in the Roman neighbourhood of Monti, fostering a rapidly expanding and lucrative cult. When a dispute broke out over who possessed the rights to the image, the pope, in the words of the chronicler who recorded the event, 'desired to please no one other than the *Catecumeni*, and so he ordered that [the image] be granted to them immediately'.[11]

Gregory ordered the construction of a sanctuary on the site where the image had been found and granted Sirleto the authority to consecrate a new church there. On June 23, 1580, the cardinal led a procession to the site of the image, where he planted a cross and the foundation stone 'to the great satisfaction of the entire populace'. The cult of the image, which performed almost daily miracles, from healing of wounds to resurrections and exorcisms, developed rapidly and spread beyond the boundaries of this heavily populated quarter (immediately northeast of the Roman Forum) to the highest ranks of the

Roman aristocracy and beyond; the bishop of Narbonne, François de Joyeuse, made a donation of one hundred *scudi* to the sanctuary when he arrived in Rome in 1581, and gifts arrived from as far as Spain. Its connection to one of the most intensely visited devotional sites in Rome seems to have placed the institute on a far more solid financial base than it had possessed in the past.[12] The church was quickly completed, and its chapels were adorned with images that illustrated the same themes of Catholic apology that formed the basis for instruction in the casa itself. In 1637, the Casa dei Catecumeni, along with two other institutes that had grown out of it, the College of Neophytes and a female convent exclusively occupied by nuns converted from Judaism, were moved into a single complex adjacent to the church.[13]

The emphasis of many contemporaries on Sirleto's liberality and paternalism were not misplaced; they were often the only means he possessed to exert his authority over converts. In the years that he governed the Casa dei Catecumeni, a series of complex and often contradictory relationships bound Sirleto and other high-ranking prelates and aristocrats to the converts in his care. The letters between Sirleto and his charges are a constant negotiation in which the cardinal's money, privileges, and protection could be sought at the price of a sincere conversion, the maintenance of Christian faith, or the procurement of the conversion of a relative, friend, or acquaintance. A Muslim who was baptized in Rome in the 1570s implored the cardinal to send her a dowry she had been promised, writing 'Monsignor, if you don't remember my name, I am the one who came from Tunis in Barbary in a pilgrim's cloak … I was called Stella, and now I am named Margarita, and I was baptized last year on Pentecost in San Giovanni'.[14] Carlo de Illuminatis, a convert who described himself as 'once a Jew' and 'now by the goodness of Blessed Jesus a Christian', reminded the cardinal of the promises of assistance that he had made at the time of his baptism and informed him that both his mother and one of his brothers were ready to convert.[15]

On one side stood the converts, driven by a range of personal motives, and on the other the cardinal, determined to keep his charges within a network of personal relationships and patrons in which they could be watched over and, to whatever extent possible, controlled. Though he would admit that 'these neophytes are persons who have plenty of imperfections coming from Judaism, and because I am their protector I learn this lesson every day in expenses and annoyance', the cardinal was willing to overlook bad behaviour or pardon it when it was in the interest of maintaining a recent conversion or procuring a new one.[16] Sirleto's protection ensured that the converts remained under his control, or that of a trusted correspondent, and that as long as they depended on his indulgence and patronage, he could also hope to prevent them from committing the gravest of sins and most heinous of crimes, apostasy.

The cardinal had the upper hand when the convert or potential convert was in the grip of the law. On more than one occasion, Sirleto offered clemency in return for conversion to Jews who had been tried and convicted for capital offences, and on another he arranged a papal pardon for a Jew who had been put on trial for attempting to convince a relative to return to Judaism for a payment of 500 ducats to the Casa dei Catecumeni.[17] Ordinarily, however, the balance of power was not so neatly defined. The further the convert lay from Rome, the more difficult it was to keep him or her under the control of the cardinal or one of his surrogates, and the more vulnerable the cardinal became to manipulation.

The dynamic of these relationships can best be seen in the cardinal's interactions with the de Pisis, a family of Roman Jews who moved to Naples after the head of the family had been baptized and renamed Giovanni. From Naples, the papal nuncio wrote to the cardinal to explain that Giovanni needed help to find a source of income after many of his possessions had been illegally confiscated. The following month, Sirleto wrote directly to de Pisis, providing him with a copy of *Cupientes Iudaeos* and promising him his full support whenever it was needed.[18] When de Pisis received the sacrament of confirmation a few months later, Sirleto sent a letter of congratulation to him and to his godfather, who returned the gesture with a box of pastries.[19] During this period, de Pisis also found employment at the hospital of the Santissima Annunziata, one of the largest and wealthiest charitable institutions in the city, a distinct improvement in status from the work as a seller of mattresses and bed sheets that he had performed in the ghetto. The cardinal remained in contact with the family, in particular following Giovanni's death, a loss that forced his widow, Costanza, to search for a new source of income. After she remarried, the cardinal also took care to recommend her new husband to the viceroy and other Neapolitan aristocrats.[20]

In 1578, however, the tribunal of the Inquisition in Naples began to investigate the family, and the information inquisitors uncovered about their activities and network of relationships revealed something more than the pious converts that Sirleto had described to his correspondents. Giovanni and Costanza's son, Massimiano, was arrested after inquisitors intercepted a shipment of matzo, or *pane azzimo*, which had been sent from Rome to Naples where it was to be distributed to a group of Levantine Jews who had been shipwrecked on the coast of Apulia and were being detained in the Castel Nuovo. Massimiano was arrested after the authorities found him inquiring about the package of azzimo at the port, and under interrogation he explained that he had been born a Jew, with the name Salomone, and had been baptized in St Peter's basilica in 1569 after forty days spent in the Casa dei Catecumeni. He explained that his interest in the package was entirely innocent: the two

imprisoned Jews had promised him forty ducats for the job in return for the package, and he had merely gone to collect it.[21]

Massimiano de Pisis described his mother and father as having made complete conversions to Christianity; while his mother had desired to remain a Jew, she had eventually been convinced by his father to convert and joined the rest of the family in Naples. However, later testimony revealed that the family had and continued to maintain a series of ambiguous and persistent links to Judaism. Costanza's second husband, Alessandro Savenales, who had told her that he was an old Christian, was in fact a converso whose family had been implicated in a recent series of trials for crypto-Judaism in the city; several of his relatives, including his aunt, had been executed.[22] Furthermore, Massimiano's connection to the shipment of matzo was not as casual as he had claimed: the package had been sent by an illustrious member of the Roman Jewish community, Salomone Corcos, with whom the de Pisis had been in contact both before their conversion and afterwards; not long before the trial, Corcos had come to Naples and visited Costanza de Pisis, perhaps in an attempt to persuade her to return to Judaism.[23]

Even more shocking for the inquisitors was the involvement of Antonio Valentino, a priest living in Naples after a long career in Rome as chaplain to Julius III and as an assistant to Cardinal Michele Saraceni, Sirleto's predecessor as protector of the catecumeni. The imprisoned Jews claimed that Valentino had organized the shipment of the *azzimi* from Rome and was supposed to have received them from Massimiano de Pisis after he had collected them from the port. Though Valentino denied all knowledge of the contents of the package, he admitted to being in contact with Salomone Corcos, and his testimony revealed an obscure mixture of business interests and ambiguous friendships with Jews, which baffled the inquisitors.[24] His connection to the Corcos family, and to other Jews, suggests that the boundaries between the clergy who administered the catechumen house and the members of the religious minority that they were attempting to convert were not always well defined or rigidly enforced.

The inquisitors in Naples allowed all three of the suspects—Massimiano de Pisis, his mother Costanza, and don Antonio Valentino—to go free after posting bail and did not appear to have pursued the investigation further. Salomone Corcos, who all of the witnesses implicated in the shipment of the matzo, was never questioned and he decided to convert to Christianity in 1581. It is unclear to what extent Sirleto was aware of the revelations of the trial in Naples, but he did not interrupt relations with the family, and in 1583 recommended Costanza de Pisis to Marcantonio Colonna, the viceroy of Sicily. He explained that he had sent the family to Naples for baptism and had continued to provide assistance to Costanza afterwards, 'and because I have

always received good information about her, I continue to recommend her'.[25] The letter makes it clear that the suspicions about the family that had emerged a few years earlier had either been hidden from his view or forgotten in the meantime, leaving the family to continue to benefit from the cardinal's benevolence and protection.

The de Pisis trial ended inconclusively, and it is unclear whether Sirleto's restraint was ill-considered or wise policy. On other occasions, it proved disastrous. In 1582, the cardinal permitted his own godson and namesake Guglielmo Sirleto to leave Italy for Crete, a Venetian territory perilously close to the border with the Ottoman Empire where he hoped to reunite with his wife and children in a meeting that was intended to bring about the conversion of the rest of the family from Judaism. The cardinal gave him letters of introduction to authorities in Naples, Venice, and Istria who offered him their protection and hospitality along the way. Each one reported back to Sirleto, giving a precise report on the convert's activities that allowed the cardinal to keep a close eye on an individual who he did not entirely trust. But even this close surveillance ultimately proved fruitless; the last letter regarding the convert Sirleto is from the patriarch of Venice, who reported that after taking out a large loan from a group of Armenian merchants, Sirleto had slipped out of the city unannounced. 'No one knows which way he was headed', the bishop wrote, 'but from some things he said, it seems that he might be going toward Constantinople'.[26]

The spread of the Casa dei Catecumeni to other parts of Italy had begun even before Sirleto was named cardinal protector (Venice was the second casa to be established, in 1557) and continued inexorably afterwards. In 1568, just before Pius V announced a new expulsion of the Jews from the Papal States, a casa was founded in Bologna. An institute in Ferrara, where the Este had established an enclave for Sephardic Jews in flight from Naples and Iberia, was opened in 1583, an event that the local bishop announced to Sirleto in a letter informing him of the large number of Jews that he had already baptized.[27] In Naples, where the Spanish viceroy had expelled the entire Jewish population in 1541, Muslim slaves were the main target of evangelization, and the cardinal extended his patronage to a lay confraternity for conversion of 'Jews, as well as Turks, and moors' founded in 1577, though a catechumen house was not established in the city until 1635 on the pier where the galleys and merchant ships carrying slaves first arrived in the city.[28] By the 1580s, many of the members of the ecclesiastical élite in Italy viewed these institutes as a key aspect of the reform of religious life, a position codified in the 1584 edition of the *Rituale Romanum*, which made explicit reference to the *domus cathecumenorum* as the proper place for the instruction of adult converts and gave instructions to bishops that every diocese should either possess a house or

be nearby to one, an ambitious plan that was never undertaken and was eventually taken out of later editions of the text.[29]

But much more than ecclesiastical input, what drove the spread of the houses into other parts of Italy was the religious fervour of individual members of the ruling houses of Italy and the figures who surrounded them at court. The foundation of three of the best documented and most active institutes coincided with turns towards a more austere piety at the courts where they were located, suggesting that the connection between the impulse to convert others and a desire for self-purification that Marc Baer has identified at the court of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV applied in the dynastic states of Italy as well.[30] In 1588, the year after the death of her husband, Guglielmo Gonzaga, in what one observer described as a 'holocaust' of mourning, Eleanor of Austria (1534–1594), a Habsburg princess who had been the Duchess of Mantua since 1561, founded a casa in the city. The house, divided into three parts consisting of a church, a residence for pilgrims and male catechumens, and a residence for female catechumens, was donated by Bartolomeo Franchini, a local priest 'to whom God had granted singular talents for governing and assisting catechumens and pilgrims'.[31] Together, Franchini and the duchess managed the financial affairs of the casa, which was heavily subsidized by members of the Gonzaga family and the court. When it became possible to enlarge the casa, Eleanor had a grand hall constructed where the Jews of the city could gather to hear the weekly sermons that they were required to attend. The institute was sustained by pious donations from other members of the Gonzaga family and exponents of the local nobility, as well as periodic concessions by the duke and bishop to allow members of the confraternity to beg for alms on its behalf. On occasion, permits were also granted to individual converts for their own sustenance, in particular those who had come from outside of the city.[32]

According to her biographer, the duchess took a particular interest in the female catechumens, providing bedclothes and food for them, and frequently accompanied women who intended to convert from their homes to her palace or the house. She also provided assistance to individual converts, granting them devotional objects as gifts and dowries that they could use either for marriage or to enter a convent. After one convert abandoned Mantua and fled to Venice, leaving his wife and children behind, the duchess took them under her protection, providing all four daughters with dowries of 500 ducats and honourable marriages. And when Jews in Bologna attempted to persuade the convert Violante da Modena to flee to the Levant, the duchess had her sent to Ferrara, where her daughter Margherita Gonzaga was duchess and then to Mantua. She even made a point of providing special assistance to Jewish merchants from as far away as Prague with their affairs in Italy, 'so that by

means of temporal graces she might pull them into the spiritual net of Christ and the bosom of the Holy Church'.[33]

In Modena, the beginnings of the local Opera Pia del Catecumeno coincided with the religious conversion of Alfonso III d'Este (1591–1644). In 1629, only a year after he became duke and still in mourning for the wife he had lost several years before, he abdicated his title in favour of his son and joined the Capuchin order. Though he had initially intended to become a missionary in Germany, as fra Giambattista d'Este, the former duke remained in his family's territory and began to specialize in the conversion of Jews, personally seeing to the baptism of dozens of his former subjects; several of the converts were given his family name, and he formed a particularly strong relationship with an adolescent convert named Mosé, who followed him into the order and became his personal secretary. During the same year as the abdication, a local notable named Annibale Calori made a pious bequest that was used to create the Opera Pia, which kept records of all of the conversions in the city and provided stipends for neophytes. Three years later, fra Giambattista helped to organize the foundation of a Casa dei Catecumeni in Reggio, the second largest city of the duchy and home to a large Jewish community, placing it under the control of his son Francesco II.[34] The links between the piety of the Este family and the conversion of Jews were further consolidated at the end of the century when the Duchess Lucrezia Barberini established a bequest for female converts, the Opera Pia Barberini, in 1682, which functioned alongside the existing charity until 1700, when the two were fused.

In Florence, the main advocate for the foundation of a catechumen house was the confessor to the Medici family, Alberto Leoni (1563–1642), a charismatic friar who had migrated across Northern and Central Italy before arriving in the Tuscan capital, where he entered into the graces of the Medici after liberating Duke Cosimo II from demonic possession in 1614. Leoni distinguished himself with his ability for producing conversions—not only of 'infidels' but also prostitutes, thieves, and condemned prisoners. And in 1636, he used his following among the aristocracy and clergy of the city to found an institute on the model of the ones that he had already encountered in Rome and Mantua. The Florentine casa was placed under the protection of Ferdinand II and Cardinal Carlo de' Medici, who selected the first group of twelve governors for the institute. The house was first established in two houses adjacent to a complex owned by the *bacchettoni*, a confraternity dedicated to the teaching of Christian doctrine, which counted many of the city's aristocratic women as its members; after these proved insufficient for the number of converts who were admitted to the institute, it was moved to another location in the nearby Borgo Pinti in 1716. The Florentine casa, like its counterparts in Mantua and Modena, depended on a combination of alms

collected by converts and donations, including one made by a noblewoman in 1667 that included four estates outside of the city.[35]

The conversion of Jews allowed princes to embody one of the most cherished and ancient Christian virtues, charity, in a way that was highly visible, easily understood, and unambiguously conformed to the ethic of the Counter-Reformation. The peculiar mix of sentiments that drove their participation in what might have been considered an entirely ecclesiastical affair is well expressed in a letter from the convert Francesco Barberino Masserano to Ferdinand II de' Medici. In a dedication, he called the duke 'a just and pious Catholic, a generous Prince and Patron of the Virtuous, abundant delight of the elevated spirits, and glory of the Italian seed' and thanked him for the 'favours' that he had received at the time of his conversion.

> I am certain that all those who might contemplate your most serene visage can see within it the affable *gravitas* and majestic humility that shine forth from it, singular virtues that adorn the great treasure granted by the heavens to the Most August House of Medici.

Yet the greatest of these virtues, he explained, was the prince's charity, 'a bond of perfection' which St Paul had been the first to recognize as the highest end of a Christian life.[36] Masserano's ode to the monarch was in many ways a recasting in Christian terms of a common manner of praising rulers for their generosity or 'liberality' towards their subjects, one that emphasized the way in which the sacred and temporal spheres of rulership were united in the body of the prince. The same concept was expressed in a different way by Bartolomeo Franchini in 1580 when he requested that Vincenzo I Gonzaga honour the baptism of a Jew with his presence, since 'this is truly the action of a prince, and not of a private citizen'.[37]

* * *

What went on behind the walls of these institutes? One of the earliest pieces of testimony regarding the Roman house comes from the English Catholic Gregory Martin, who in his 1581 survey of the holy sites of Rome included a brief description of it as a place where Jews and Muslims could be trained in religion and made *competentes*, ready for baptism, a process which could last several months, and in some cases an entire year. The casa was thus a place for the 'late converted' to receive instruction, meant only for those who had made a firm decision to become Christians. The rules of the casa itself imposed a rigorous schedule of catechism (four times a day), observance of the minor and major festivities of the church, including reading the lives of saints, 'to inflame them in the life of a good Christian in imitation of the foresaid saint', and

visitation of churches. The rules also indicated that the convert could not leave the casa before baptism and that any catechumen found outside of the house after dark could be placed in prison, on a diet of bread and water.[38]

The regulations for the Florentine institute drafted by archbishop Pietro Niccolini in 1636 are among the most detailed available and provide a glimpse into the complex organization of the casa and the array of officials and employees that worked there. The house was governed by a lay congregation of twelve governors, initially chosen by the archbishop and later by the grand duke.[39] From this group, a series of officials were selected by lottery: a prior, who served for three months, and a viceprior who took over his duties in case of absence or sickness; when the prior's term finished, the viceprior took his place until a new election was held. The prior was responsible for calling a meeting of the governors once a month 'in order to take account of the persons and state of the house', and his decisions could be overruled by a two-thirds majority.[40] Two visitors were elected to inspect the house regularly and

> 'visit the catechumens and neophytes and diligently examine their lives, learn from parish priests where they live, whether they have confessed and taken communion at the proper times established by the Holy Roman Church, inquire about their lives from neighbours and others …'[41]

Their interactions with the converts regarded every sphere of their lives: They were responsible for finding dowries and suitable husbands for female converts and work for young men, making peace between converts and their wives and siblings, and for distributing alms to them when they were in need. Most importantly, they were meant to provide 'loving … fraternal correction' to those converts who had strayed from an upright life and proper religion and inform the congregation, when necessary, of those who refused to mend their ways.[42] Two syndics were elected to keep the accounts of the casa, as well as a chancellor, who kept records of the personnel of the casa and the converts who had come to live in it. Finally, 'since the judgment and expertise of women is necessary for the many things of this holy government', the congregation of governors was flanked by a congregation of noblewomen, elected by the grand duke, who were solely responsible for the female catechumens, over whom they had 'the same authority as mothers have over their own daughters'.[43]

Underneath the governors lay a group of employees of the congregation who served at their pleasure. The most important of these was the instructor, a priest chosen by the grand duke to impart the basics of Christian doctrine to the catechumens for no less than forty days, who was responsible for declaring them fit for baptism and who accompanied the catechumens when they were baptized. Afterwards, he would continue to visit the converts, provide 'Christian company', attend to their spiritual needs, and choose confessors for them to visit regularly, reminding them to listen to sermons and to attend

mass.[44] Two guardians, preferably a married couple 'of good and honest life', would live continuously in the house in order to provide an example of Christian living and enforce the rigid separation between the two sexes that the house required: Female and male converts were not to see one another or speak to one another for any reason.[45] Finally, a reviser of works, a kind of workshop foreman, was employed in order to evaluate the handcrafts produced by the young women living in the house to ensure that they were of the necessary quality and place them on the market; the proceeds were set aside until after they had been baptized.[46]

The rules also contained a detailed set of criteria for every stage of the acceptance of a convert. First, individuals were not to be accepted in the house without 'sufficient information about their life and customs, and regarding their sincere and pure study and desire to receive the holy baptism'.[47] Aspiring converts were required to make an explicit verbal request to the bishop, which was duly inscribed in the records of the congregation. Afterwards, the convert would be taken to the instructor, who would bring him or her to the house. The convert was not to leave without the instructor's permission for the following forty days, nor was he or she allowed to send or receive letters from any 'infidel', even from close relatives.[48] The instructor was allowed, at his discretion, to have the catechumen give sermons in the city's churches as a way of publicizing his or her conversion and testifying to the truth of Christianity. When the forty days had expired, the convert was dressed in a white sheet and brought through the streets, accompanied by neophytes, members of the city's confraternities, and a group of trumpeters, to the church, where they were greeted by members of the congregation of governors and, frequently, a member of the Medici family or another aristocratic house who served as godparent. Prior to the ceremony, members of the confraternities were sent out throughout the city to publicize the event, through sermons in the local parishes and broadsheets posted in the streets, and to collect alms that would be used to provide dowries or money for subsistence afterwards.[49] Once baptism was complete, converts returned to the casa where they were allowed to stay for a further fifteen days before being sent on their way 'to live by their own labours' with whatever alms they had accumulated during their stay and a severe admonition to avoid 'commerce with Jews or infidels …'[50]

These rules, which reflected the accumulated experience of nearly a century of activity in the existing Italian houses, were meant to guarantee that conversion was voluntary, that converts received a sustained and thorough education in Christian doctrine and practice, and that they were able to find a steady livelihood and the necessary social support to continue living as Christians afterwards. And though the Florentine statutes are notable for the complexity of the organization they created, they were essentially similar to

those drafted by the bishop of Modena, Carlo Molza, in 1681, which established that any contact between converts and infidels had to be mediated by the prior of the Dominican convent or a priest chosen by the bishop, that converts had to continue to attend lessons in Christian doctrine, avoid unseemly locales such as gaming parlours, and notify authorities every time they left the city. The rules also mentioned an official, the deputy of the neophytes, who was specifically responsible for helping converts find a steady source of income after baptism.[51]

In Florence, the records of the meetings of the governors from 1640 to 1673 show them engaging in a number of roles: from selecting priests and instructing individual converts to managing a range of personal and familial affairs on their behalf. Most of their time and energy was dedicated to seeing to the material needs of the converts, which ranged from collecting alms to the more complicated tasks of flanking them in legal proceedings or undertaking marriage negotiations on their behalf: In 1641, they petitioned the grand duke to delegate a special judge for a lawsuit involving a convert, Maria Maddalena Maffei, who wanted to recover her mother's dowry from her relatives, and two years later, they made a deposit on her behalf at the Monte di Pietà so that she could pay the necessary dowry to become a nun. In 1664, they approached Prince Leopoldo de' Medici to serve as godfather to Lazzaro da Rodi, with the expectation that the convert might find employment afterwards as a footman in the prince's retinue. They provided 100 scudi to the convert Maria Lisabetta Capponi in 1669 so that she could muster the 200 scudi she needed for her marriage to the *vermicellaio* (pasta maker) Giuseppe Lombardi. And in emergencies, when the resources of the casa weren't enough, as in the case of Carlo the Turk in 1640, the governors reached into their own pockets to find the money required to sustain a convert or pay for his time in the casa.[52]

The records of the congregation of governors, and with them most of the other documentary records, are on the other hand surprisingly silent about one of the most important decisions to be made regarding a convert: The choice of a new name. Nothing more effectively demarcated the passage from one religious community to another, and the shedding of one's old identity and the adoption of a new one, than the acceptance of a new name at baptism. And converts and their protectors sometimes selected highly symbolic names that unmistakably announced their changed identity: From the 'pure' and 'reborn' nun Suor Candida Renata in late sixteenth-century Mantua, to the Livornine Jew who became Francesco Xaverio Fortunati in 1691, converts often served as walking advertisements for the faith.[53] The names of saints, or of New Testament figures who themselves had undergone conversion, such as Paul or Mary Magdalen, were also popular. But by far the most common practice, as can be seen in numerous examples cited earlier, was the practice of simply

naming converts after their godparents, as in the case of 'Maomet del Gran Cairo', a slave belonging to Prince Giancarlo de' Medici who after baptism in 1630 took his patron's name and became a stable hand at the Pitti Palace in Florence, or the former Samuel ben Nachmias who became Giulio Morosini after his godfather Angelo Morosini, scion of one of Venice's most illustrious patrician families.[54] This practice was most widespread in Rome, where more than one cardinal had a convert doppelgänger in his entourage, a distinctive attribute which highlighted the lord's wealth and munificence and hinted at the redemptive miracle-working powers of a prince of the church—figures such as Michele Bonelli, Agostino Boncompagni, Ascanio Colonna, Cristoforo Madruzzo, Carlo Borromeo, Gregorio Barbarigo, Clemente Albani, and the aforementioned Guglielmo Sirleto were stand-ins for their 'spiritual fathers' whose presence in the curia was frequently noticed by diplomats and the authors who provided information to the rest of Italy and Europe.[55]

Finally, when a name had been selected, all of the houses kept registers of the converts who had successfully received instruction and gone on to baptism, which contain the names of converts, their ages at the time of conversion, and the dates of their baptisms, though these records are often incomplete, and cover different periods of time, making close comparison difficult or impossible. Nevertheless, the rough figures that do exist reveal that the activity of the catechumen houses was relatively small in terms of numbers. In Rome, extant records contain 1958 baptisms of Jews and 1086 of Muslims between 1614 and 1797. In Naples, the most populous city in Italy, the congregation of catechumens registered 2,365 baptisms between 1583 and 1664. The smaller the city, the fewer baptisms that took place there: In Modena, officials recorded 287 baptisms between 1629 and 1796, while in Pesaro, only forty Jews converted during the entire seventeenth century at a rate of less than one conversion per year, roughly 7 per cent of the city's entire Jewish population. A stay in the Casa dei Catecumeni was a relatively rare experience in early modern Italy, though there is no way to count the conversions that took place in confessionals, prisons, galleys, palaces, and the numerous other locations, both urban and rural, where non-Christians came to terms with a society that was ever-more solidly organized around the hegemony of the Catholic Church.[56]

The statistical records also make it clear that Jews were far more frequent guests of the houses than members of any other religious group, though the individual institutes often had more complex histories. In Naples, where Jews had been expelled from the city and arrived only intermittently after 1541, only a handful appeared among the vast registers of slave baptisms. In Florence, the Medici sponsorship of the military order of Santo Stefano, based in Pisa, guaranteed a steady flow of Muslims to the capital where they

underwent baptism and for a long time outnumbered the Jews who entered the Florentine house. The balance changed only in the 1690s, when the grand duke Cosimo III de' Medici, reversing over a century of protection and religious tolerance towards the Jewish communities of Tuscany, began a policy of repression that eventually persuaded a number of Jews, under the pressure of worsening conditions and weakened protection from the state, to enter the house and undergo baptism.[57] On occasion, the houses also opened their doors to members of other, more recondite religious traditions, and while Protestants were not ordinarily allowed to enter them, exceptions were sometimes made, in particular for members of the radical sects who had never been baptized. In 1726, Samuel Clochor, a Swiss Anabaptist, entered the Casa dei Catecumeni in Pesaro and emerged with the new name of Giovanni Francesco.[58]

* * *

The consensus that had accompanied the spread of the catechumen houses throughout the peninsula began to break down over the course of the seventeenth century, when a divergence appeared between the way they were managed in Rome and the Papal States and in the other Italian states. The disagreement turned around the problem of coercion and forced ecclesiastical and civil authorities to return to the same problems that had led to the foundation of the institute in the previous century. While the general principle that conversions must be voluntary remained valid, the central administrative and judicial authorities of the church began to justify and condone two practices which had previously been considered illegitimate: the baptism of infants and young children against the wishes of their parents (*invitis parentibus*) and the 'offering' (*oblatio*) of Jews to the church by third parties, often relatives who had already converted, and sometimes with the excuse that the individual in question had in the past expressed a wish to become Christian. Though these practices had their roots in the anxieties of both ordinary Christians and converts, who were frequently unwilling to respect convention in their desire to save the soul of a relative or an infant, over time the church slowly shifted its attitude towards them, becoming more tolerant of abuses that in the past had been roundly condemned.

In 1591, Clement VIII accepted the offer of a Jewish child for conversion, and as early as 1641, the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office sanctioned the arrest and temporary detention in the Casa dei Catecumeni of adult Jews who had been denounced as having publicly expressed the desire to convert, with the justification that they needed to be removed from the pressures of the ghetto in order that 'their true inclination be comprehended in that benevolent place and that frauds and collusions might be avoided'.[59] Over the following

century, a consensus among members of the Roman congregations began to coalesce regarding the problems created by offerings and infant conversions: In cases of doubt or emergency, (such as a baptism furtively issued by a Christian wet-nurse to a Jewish child or to an unconscious or ill individual), the formal validity of baptism necessarily prevailed over the intentions of those who received it. This principle, which became known as *favor fidei*, gave way to widespread abuses, which the church nevertheless usually tolerated and refused to combat. In 1747 and 1751, the principle was fully endorsed by Pope Benedict XIV, who in two letters laid out a precise and cogent legal justification for the defence of these practices that was to provide a strong weapon in the hands of their practitioners, further loosening the standards for legitimate baptism (among other provisions, he lowered the age of consent to baptism from thirteen to seven years).[60]

These and later provisions of a similar nature provided legal sanction for some of the darkest moments in history of the catechumen houses. Rome in the second half of the eighteenth century was the scene of a series of episodes that included kidnappings and forced periods of reclusion, often with the intention of intimidating the unwilling convert into accepting baptism. Documents such as the diary of Anna Del Monte, a Jewish teenager who was arrested in the Roman ghetto and brought to the Casa dei Catecumeni following a denunciation by a convert, depict the house as a place where the unwilling were subjected to threats and solitary confinement, a constant psychological assault that was meant to wear down any remaining doubt or resistance. Stories like hers, rare in previous centuries, became more common during the course of the eighteenth century, and other men and women who found themselves in the institutes against their will reacted even more violently. Mazaldò Franceschi, after being arrested and brought to the house in 1770, struggled with the guards and attempted to escape; yet after a stay of eighty days (twice the normal period), she became, in the words of the cardinal protector, Alessandro Albani, 'a docile lamb in the flock of Jesus Christ'.[61]

Zealous members of the clergy engaged in and encouraged the same kind of practices elsewhere and were often ready to go to extremes to defend them: To cite one example, in 1709, the archbishop of Pisa had the body of a child who had died after being secretly baptized exhumed from the Jewish cemetery where his parents had buried him and reinterred it in the adjacent Christian burial ground.[62] Yet, while *favor fidei* reigned supreme in the Papal States, it encountered a more determined opposition in other places, not only from Jews but also from secular authorities who viewed the principle and the practices it justified as a threat to the delicate coexistence that they had established with the local Jewish communities and an intrusion of the church into purely secular matters of civil law. Lawyers and magistrates in their employ were

quick to uphold the rights of fathers over sons and daughters, citing authorities such as Giacomo Antonio Marta, a professor of law at the university of Padua who had written an influential opinion authorizing Venetian authorities to return a Jewish boy named Isaac to his father after he repented his decision to offer him to the local bishop. Marta argued that such offerings were only valid when the father himself converted and remained in the religion and that the rights of fathers over their children in any case prevailed over any other claims. Even when offers of converts were made in the form of a written contract, they lacked the force of law.[63]

These arguments were taken up with increasing frequency from the second half of the seventeenth century, and as the Roman curia became more inflexible in its willingness to justify any sort of subterfuge that might lead to an acquisition of 'new souls', the governments of the Italian states took increasingly radical measures to safeguard the prerogatives of individual converts and Jewish communities. A section of the charter granted to the Jews of Livorno in 1591 that prohibited baptism *invitis parentibus* was extended to all of Tuscany in 1668 after an episode in Florence that provoked the outrage of the Jewish community and was viewed by many at the Medici court as a violation of ducal sovereignty.[64] In Mantua, a decree prohibiting Christians from 'seducing or violating' the children of Jews by inducing them to baptism before the age of consent was first issued in 1554 and reiterated in 1588 with increased penalties that included a fine of 300 scudi and three lashes of the whip.[65] In 1654, Francesco I d'Este issued a decree forbidding Christians in the Duchy of Modena from kidnapping Jewish children under the age of thirteen or keeping them in their homes, though he ultimately allowed at least one such child to be baptized following an interview with the local official involved.[66]

The mistrust of these sovereigns towards practices that were broadly tolerated in ecclesiastical circles was gradually transformed into a more resolute opposition, especially when it was reinforced by the Enlightenment ideals of legal rationalism and absolutist defence of secular jurisdiction. In 1748, the Tuscan minister Giulio Rucellai, who developed a reputation for aggressively pursuing the interests of the state against ecclesiastical claims in a number of spheres, expropriated the Florentine Casa dei Catecumeni from the congregation of governors, a decision which appears to have been justified by the state of the house's finances but which had far more wide-reaching consequences. Within a few years, he began to allow the relatives of Jewish catechumens into the walls of the institute in order to observe their examinations and communicate with them, an extraordinary departure from the standards, and even from the intentions of the Roman founders of the institute, who had viewed strict separation from the Jewish community as one of the benchmarks of the institution and the source of its effectiveness.

Furthermore, Rucellai demonstrated a will to examine questionable cases impartially, handing down sentences that occasionally prevented baptism. The fourteen-year-old Laura Bolaffi was returned to her father in 1783 after her convert mother had offered her to the Casa dei Catecumeni, a decision that Rucellai justified on the basis of *patria potestas*, the venerable authority granted by Roman law to fathers over their children.[67] In Modena, the infant Leon Osimo was also returned to his family on the order of the duke after being kidnapped and offered to the church in 1778. More generally, clergy involved in conversions in the states of Northern Italy seem to have been put on the defensive. Near Mantua, the priest of Gazzuolo assured an investigating magistrate in 1770 that he had not only allowed Giuditta Portaleoni, who had come to him to convert, to speak with members of her family, but had left the door of his house open at all times and allowed the Jews to come every day to bring her 'the foods of her nation', prepared according to the requirements of the community.[68]

Similar tensions arose between civil and ecclesiastical authorities, though in a much more subdued form, over the question of the baptism of Muslim slaves. Slaves made up the majority of the Muslim converts in Italy, and some of them appealed to a legal tradition still credited by the papacy in the sixteenth century, which dictated that baptized slaves should be freed by their masters and granted rights of citizenship. Though never truly enforced, this tradition nevertheless provided a disincentive for masters to allow their slaves to convert to Catholicism, and both civil and ecclesiastical authorities walked a fine line in adjudicating disputes that arose over the conflict between the values of Christianity and the rights of property owners. There is no evidence that these disputes ever affected the administration of the catechumen houses, though they did periodically attract the attention of courts and jurists in Naples and other cities throughout the period.[69]

* * *

Despite the challenges posed by the confrontation between Italian civil authorities who were increasingly imbued with Enlightenment values and an ecclesiastical élite that viewed more aggressive conversion of Jews as a central part of their reaction to the onslaught of rationalism, the catechumen houses did not fall victim to this conflict the way other symbols of the Counter-Reformation, such as the Jesuit order (suppressed in 1773) and the courts of the Inquisition (phased out of existence in many Italian states beginning in the 1750s), did. The institution remained, even after the Napoleonic invasions had come and gone, in full operation in many Italian cities, and retained a prominent role in the restored papal monarchy. The many ways in which the

opere for conversion of Jews intersected with the 'Roman Question' and other issues surrounding the unification of Italy are beyond the scope of this book, but it is important to emphasize that they did endure, in Florence until 1870, in Modena until 1914, and in Rome until the 1930s, because they continued to enjoy the support of local élites and not only of the clergy.[70]

Throughout the early modern period, most Italians were united in viewing the conversion of a Jew or a Muslim as an event to be celebrated. Disagreements arose primarily over the means that were used to obtain conversions; and in this respect, the problems that had led to the creation of the catechumen house in 1542 were still present even when the Counter-Reformation had run its course. The aspirations of Loyola and his supporters to create an institution that could produce an objective or entirely spiritual path to conversion, free of worldly concerns and, above all, liberated from the spectres of forced conversion and apostasy that haunted Iberia was ultimately too idealistic to be fully realized, even in the relatively controlled and uniform environment of Rome. What began as a charitable enterprise unquestionably degenerated, in the Papal States as well as other parts of Italy, into something more sinister, resembling a trap set for Jews facing financial or familial problems and one which exacted a very high price from its victims.

Yet even in its most controversial moments, the Casa dei Catecumeni largely pursued conversions within a legal framework and insisted on the respect for the rules of conversion, including the maintenance of personal property and the observance of a forty-day period of instruction. This is an important distinction, however unsatisfying it may appear to a twenty-first century vision of secularism and universal human rights. Though the catechumen houses were governed by a system of rules that was strongly imbalanced against the Jews and Muslims it targeted, their administrators were nevertheless held to respect these rules and provide certain minimum guarantees and forms of assistance to those who entered its walls. Just as importantly, through instruction and social assistance to converts, the clergy in charge of these institutes created incentives and social and economic barriers for any convert who attempted to rescind his or her decision and return to Judaism or Islam. In this respect, at the very least, while Loyola's attempt to remove the violence that had marred the history of conversion in Spain and Portugal failed, his insistence on resolute and unambiguous conversions was respected and effectively if brutally enforced by the methods of the catechumen house. Despite many cases of backsliding and apostasy among converts, Italian society was able to avoid the formation of large groups of new converts who were neither.

Whatever its faults, Italy's élites were united in seeing the institution's value for the defence of Italy's confessional identity, and among the strongest pieces

of evidence for this is the fact that in the seventeenth century, they created a parallel network of institutions for the conversion of much larger and heterogeneous minority, the *oltramontani*, northern Protestants who began to enter Italy in ever larger numbers.

Notes

1 See the entry on Parisio by G. Marcocci in *DSI*, vol. 3, pp. 1172–73.

2 On Loyola as a 'deep spiritual semite' and critic of the statutes of blood purity, see R. Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews: Jesuits of Jewish Ancestry and Purity-of-blood Laws in the Early Society of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

3 'illos in articulos fidei, ac legis novae praeceptis catholicaeque Ecclesiae ritibus diligenter instruere': *Magnum Bullarium Romanum a Beato Leone Magno usque ad S.D.N. Benedictum XIII* (Luxembourg, 1727), vol. 1, pp. 758–9.

4 *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, vol. 1, pp. 767–9.

5 The novelty of the casa is emphasized in C. Fanucci, *Tutte le opere pie dell'alma città di Roma* (Rome, 1600), pp. 175–78. Loyola's official biographer, Pedro de Ribadeneira, indicates that he developed the idea for the catechumen house and suggested it to the pope, *Vita P. Ignatii Loiolae* (Cologne, 1602), p. 266; more evidence of Loyola's involvement in the early years of the institute is in P. Tacchi Venturi, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia* (Rome: La Civiltà Cattolica, 1910), vol. 2, part 2, pp. 147–60, 154–55.

6 On the campaign against the conversos of Ancona, of which no trial record or extended account has survived, see R. Segre, 'La Controriforma: espulsioni, conversioni, isolamento', in Vivanti (ed.), *Gli Ebrei in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi), vol. 1, pp. 709–78.

7 For papal policy towards the Jews of Italy and conversos on Italian soil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Segre, 'La Controriforma', and K. R. Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555–1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977), which provides a meticulous analysis of the legal arguments for the Roman ghetto.

8 The office of cardinal protector was instituted by *Illius* in 1543, but its authority expanded with legislation issued by Paul IV in 1556 that granted the protector full civil and criminal jurisdiction over 'catechumens, converts, and neophytes'; it also gave the protector the responsibility for collecting an annual tax on the Jewish communities of the Papal States that was used to finance the Casa dei Catecumeni, *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, vol. 1, pp. 825–7.

9 J. Vaz da Mota, *Funebris oratio in illustriss. et reuerendiss. S.R.E. cardinalem Gulielmum Sirletum. Habita a Ioanne Vaz Motta Lusitano I.V.D. in æde D. Laurentij in Pane et Perna* (Rome, 1585), unnumbered; on Sirleto's career, see G. Denzler, *Kardinal Guglielmo Sirleto (1514–1585), Leben und Werk. Ein Beitrag zur nachtridentischen Reform* (Munich: Heuber, 1964); S. Ditchfield, 'Guglielmo Sirleto', in *DSI*, vol. 3, p. 1437. On his relations with Jews, R. Segre, 'Il mondo ebraico nei cardinali della Controriforma', in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei in Italia tra rinascimento ed età barocca. Atti del II convegno internazionale* (Rome, 1986), pp. 119–38.

10 G. Botero, *Dell'uffitio del cardinale, libri due* (Rome, 1599), pp. 72–3.

11 F. Corrubolo (ed.), 'Historia dell'origine e miracoli della Madonna de' Monti in Roma', *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà*, 17 (2004), pp. 129–213; the only existing manuscript of this anonymous text—recently discovered by its editor in a private collection—bears Sirleto's name, which suggests that it was written with his approval or at his instructions.

12 Corrubolo (ed.), 'Historia dell'origine', p. 183.

13 M. Caffiero, 'Catecumeni' in *DSI*, vol. 1, pp. 312–14; on the inconographic program of the church of Santa Maria dei Monti, see C. H. Wood and P. I. Kaufman, 'Tacito Predicatore: The Annunciation Chapel at the Madonna dei Monti in Rome', *Catholic Historical Review*, 90 (2004), pp. 634–49.

14 BAV, ms. Ottob. Lat. 2452, f. 168, letter dated November 4, 1582, signed Moscardina Milanese.

15 BAV, ms. Ottob. Lat. 2452, f. 140, in this undated letter, de Illuminatis identified himself as the 'nephew of Michele Ghislieri,' meaning that the future pope served as his godfather at baptism.

16 Letter from Sirleto to Cardinal Nicola Caetani, dated August 13, 1582, cited in Segre, 'Il mondo ebraico', p. 136.

17 The beneficiary of the pardon was Lazzaro Levi 'hebreo lodigiano processato dall'inquisitore di Pavia', BAV, ms. Ottob. Lat. 2452, f. 85; on Sirleto's attempts to convert Jews condemned to capital sentences,

see the document recounting the execution of Salamone Ebreo Siciliano, doc. LXIV in D. Orano, *Liberi Pensatori Bruciati in Roma dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Rome, 1904), pp. 65–7, and the trial of a Roman Jew reconstructed by S. di Nepi, '"Io come madre cercava ogni strada". Una madre ebrea e un figlio nei guai nella Roma del Cinquecento', *Storia delle Donne*, 3 (2007), pp. 99–121.

18 BAV, ms. Vat. Lat. 6182, f. 45, Cesare Brumano, nuncio, to Sirleto, September 27, 1569; BAV, ms. Vat. Lat. 6946, f. 115r: Sirleto to Giovanni De Pisis, October 23, 1569.

19 BAV, ms. Vat. Lat. 6946, f. 125v, Sirleto to de Pisis, January 22, 1569 and to Pietro Jacovo Palomba, January 22, 1569; f. 127, Sirleto to Palomba, February 12, 1569.

20 BAV, ms. Vat. Lat. 6946, f. 267v, Sirleto to Marcello Filomarino, April 24, 1579, f. 267v, Sirleto to Annibale di Capua, archbishop of Naples, April 24, 1579, f. 268v, Sirleto to the Reggente Salazar, June 10, 1579.

21 ASDN, Sant'Ufficio 386, ff. 3r-8v; I thank Giovanni Romeo for providing me with a transcript of the trial record, which is currently unavailable for consultation.

22 In 1571, Alessandro Savanales was named during the first wave of inquisitorial trials against the community of Iberian conversos in Naples; the relevant deposition is transcribed in P. A. Mazur, *The New Christians of Spanish Naples, 1528–1671: A Fragile Elite* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 132–33.

23 ASDN, Sant'Ufficio 386, ff. 34r–37r; the Corcos were among the most prominent banking families in the Roman Jewish community; several members of the family converted to Catholicism, beginning with Elia Corcos in 1566, in carefully staged baptisms in the presence of Pius V, Gregory XIII, and Clement VIII; see A. Bianco, 'Cesare Baronio e la conversione dei Corcos nei documenti d'archivio della Congregazione Oratoriana di Roma', in L. Giulia (ed.), *Baronio e le sue fonti. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi* (Sora: Centro di Studi Sorani 'Vincenzo Patriarca', 2009), pp. 153–65; M. Bevilacqua, 'Residenze di Ebrei conversi nella Roma del Seicento: Giovanni Antonio de' Rossi e la costruzione di palazzo Boncompagni', in M. Bevilacqua and M. L. Madonna (eds), *Il sistema delle residenze nobiliari. Stato pontificio e Granducato di Toscana* (Rome: De Luca, 2004), pp. 149–72, and M. Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms: Histories of Jews, Christians, and Converts in Papal Rome*, trans. L. G. Cochrane (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), pp. 206–7.

24 ASDN, Sant'Ufficio 386, f. 19r-23r.

25 BAV, Vat.Lat. 6946, f. 368, Sirleto to Marcantonio Colonna, June 20, 1583.

26 BAV, ms. Vat. Lat. 6182, f. 718r, Giovanni Trevisan, Patriarch of Venice, to Sirleto, October 28, 1584.

27 BAV, Ottob.Lat. 2452, f. 124; Vat. Lat. 6182, p. II, f. 654; M. Marzola, *Per la storia della Chiesa Ferrarese nel Secolo XVI (1497–1590)* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1976), pp. 620–23; On the casa in Bologna, A. Campanini, 'L'identità coatta. La casa dei catecumeni a Bologna', in M. G. Muzzarelli (ed.), *Verso l'epilogo di una convivenza. Gli ebrei a Bologna in età moderna* (Florence: Giuntina, 1996), pp. 155–76.

28 G. Boccadamo, *Napoli e l'Islam. Storie di musulmani, schiavi, e rinnegati in età moderna* (Naples: M. D'Auria, 2010), pp. 119–74.

29 *Rituale Romanum iussu Gregorii XIII papae* (Rome, 1584).

30 M. Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

31 A. Folcario, *Vita della Serenissima Eleonora Arciduchessa d'Austria, Duchessa di Mantova e di Monferrato* (Mantua, 1598), p. 172; Folcario, the duchess's Jesuit confessor, wrote the most detailed account of the foundation of the casa; it is also described in a chronicle from the period, G. B. Vigilio, *La Insalata. Cronaca Mantovana dal 1561 al 1602*, ed. D Ferrari e C. Mozzarelli (Mantua: Gianluigi Arcari Editore, 1992), pp. 74–5; the donations to the casa are listed in ASM, Corpi Religiosi Soppressi, vol. 617. The phrase 'holocaust' comes from the eulogy of the duchess by A. Possevino, *Vita et Morte della Serenissima Eleonora, Arciduchessa d'Austria e Duchessa di Mantova* (Mantua, 1594).

32 Folcario, *Vita*, pp. 167–73; the permits for *neofiti* can be found in ASDMa, Ebrei, ff. 74, 89, 90, 91.

33 Folcario, *Vita*, pp. 174–85; the registers of Gonzaga correspondence contain two letters from the Duchess in favour of the Jewish merchants Jacob Scrivano of Prague (June 25, 1590) and Abramo de Sacerdoti of Bolzano (July 20, 1590), ASM, Gonzaga 2151, f. 732, 744; Folcario, *Vita*, pp. 179–80, describes the duchess's favour of Jewish merchants as driven by a desire to 'drive them … out of the shadows … and into the light of the Gospel, and to win them all for Christ'.

34 On the casa in Modena, A. Balletti, *Gli ebrei e gli Estensi* (Reggio Emilia: Anonima Poligrafica, 1930), pp. 193–212 and M. Al Kalak and I. Pavan, *Un'altra fede. Le Case dei catecumeni nei territori estensi* (Florence: Olschki, 2013), pp. 1–25, in particular pp. 12–7; M. P. Balboni, *Gli Ebrei del Finale nel*

Cinquecento e nel Seicento (Florence: Giuntina, 2005), pp. 93–4, contains detailed descriptions of several conversions in Finale, a town in Modenese territory, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; on Francesco Vecchi see M. Schenetti, *I Cappuccini di Modena: Quattro secoli di Storia* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1978), pp. 106–8; a letter from Giambattista d'Este to Ferdinand II de' Medici requesting the presence of his wife, Vittoria della Rovere, at the baptism of a Jew in Modena in 1635 is in ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1003, f. 109; the biography of Giambattista d'Este by Roberto Lecchini contains several references to his involvement in the conversion of Jews, *Alfonso III duca di Modena e Reggio, p. Giambattista d'Este cappucino* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1979), pp. 96–7, 109; on a well-documented case history of a convert from Modena and his family, see A. Zanardo, '"Lor colpa fu d'esser sedotti": un processo dell'Inquisizione modenese ad ebrei e neofiti', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, LXXX (1996), pp. 525–92.

35S. Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa dei catecumeni di Firenze (1636–1799)', doctoral thesis, Scuola Normale Superiore, 2010–2011 Academic Year, 55, pp. 187–92.

36ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1003, f. 96, letter dated April 27, 1635; Masserano, as his name suggests, converted in Rome during the papacy of Urban VIII; his conversion became the occasion for the imposition of an odious new levy on the Jewish population called the 'Massarano tax'; Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms*, p. 207.

37ASM, Gonzaga 2612, filza 31.

38G. Martin, *Roma Sancta*, ed. G. B. Parks (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969), pp. 82–3; L. Fiorani, 'Verso la nuova città. Conversione e conversionismo a Roma nel Cinque-Seicento', *Ricerche per la Storia Religiosa di Roma*, 10 (1998), pp. 91–186, 178–79.

39ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, 'Costituzioni ordini e leggi della casa dei catecumeni di firenze aperta l'anno mdcxxxvi', f. 390r; the analysis in Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa', pp. 25–7 is based on a different copy of the statues stored in the Florentine episcopal archive which I did not have the opportunity to consult; the first group of governors included a priest, Alessandro Medici, who was also the son of Vitale Medici, the former rabbi Yehiel da Pesaro whose conversion in 1583 was heavily promoted in Florence by the Medici; ibid., f. 418v. On Vitale Medici, see Segre, 'Il mondo ebraico nei Cardinali della Controriforma', p. 131, the entry by L. Saracco in *DBI*, vol. 73, pp. 178–79, and S. Furstenberg-Levi, 'The Sermons of a Rabbi Converted to Christianity: Between Synagogue and Church', in Stelling, Hendrix, and Richardson (eds.), *The Turn of the Soul*, pp. 281–98.

40ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 391v-392r.

41ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 393v-394r.

42ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, f. 394r.

43ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 396v–397r.

44ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 390v–391r.

45ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 396v–397r; the casa in Reggio employed a 'fattore' and 'fattora' whose responsibilities were analogous to those of the guardians and had a separate board of noblewomen who oversaw female converts, see Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, p. 29.

46ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 394r–394v.

47ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, f. 392r.

48Though forty days was the standard amount of time prescribed by the statutes of all of the houses, there were occasionally exceptions made for longer stays; the record appears to have been held by Elisabetta Parisetti, who lived in the house in Modena for eighteen years at the end of the seventeenth century: Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, p. 36.

49ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 392r–393v. Baptisms were also a way of celebrating other events, particularly military victories against the Ottoman Empire. In order to pray for the success of her husband Marcantonio Colonna in the expedition of the Holy League in 1571, Felice Orsini made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Loreto, where she presided over the baptism of a 'giovinetto hebreo' who was given a golden chain and employed as a page in her retinue. O. Torsellino, *De L'historia Lauretana libri cinque* (Milan, 1600), pp. 193–94.

50ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 398r–398v.

51Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, p. 22; the statutes of the casa in Reggio made a similar provision, with the justification that the sight of converts begging would be scandalous and discourage other Jews from following their example. See M. Al Kalak, 'I 'frutti' della conversione. Per la storia della Casa dei Catecumeni di Reggio Emilia', *Materia Giudaica* (2009), vol. 14, p. 478: 'quanto al temporale

non siano necessitati mendicare con scandalo, ma siano di buon essempio alli hebrei per convertirsi, provedendoli la congregatione d'elemosine publiche e private come meglio giudicherà'.

52ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5363, ff. 421v–422v, 432v, 433r–434r; The case of Maria Maddalena Maffei is similar to one that occurred in Mantua in 1603. There the rector of the casa, Bartolomeo Franchini, had the father of Brunetta de Servis, Moises, imprisoned by the duke after he attempted to deprive his daughter of her dowry. The ducal commissioner searched the home of a pawnbroker to whom Moises had sold the goods and confiscated a number of valuables that belonged to Brunetta, including silk drapery and seventeen gold buttons. ASM, Gonzaga 3401, fasc. 1.

53ASM, Gonzaga 2689, ins. 1, f. 49; L. Frattarelli Fischer, 'Percorsi di conversione di ebrei nella Livorno di fine Seicento', *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, XIII (2006), pp. 139–67.

54ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5178, ff. 20–1; Morosini's conversion is recounted in the introduction to his *Via della Fede mostrata agli Ebrei* (Rome, 1683).

55on cardinals and their godsons, Segre, 'Il Mondo Ebraico nei Cardinali della Controriforma', pp. 127–30 and Frattarelli Fischer, 'Percorsi di conversione di ebrei nella Livorno di fine Seicento', pp. 146–50; a plea from 'Michele Bonelli e sua moglie Cicilia Boncompagni neofiti' to Cardinal Sirleto, undated, is in BAV, Ottob.Lat. 2452, f. 99; on Barbarigo, M. Cassese, *Espulsione, assimilazione, tolleranza. Chiesa, Stati del Nord Italia e minoranze religiose ed etniche in età moderna* (Trieste: EUT, 2009), p. 55; an 'Ascanio Colonna neofita' is mentioned in Archivio Doria Pamphili Landi, Fondo Aldobrandini, b. 26 ff.nn; the life of the Oratorian father Agostino Boncompagni, whose name paid both tribute to the reigning pontiff Gregory XIII and his godfather Cardinal Agostino Cusani, is recounted by Paolo Arringhi in Biblioteca Vallicelliana, ms. O.59, ff. 261–5; on similar naming practices in Germany and Austria, see E. Carlebach, *Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500–1750* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), pp. 110–11.

56On Rome, W. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Le bapteme de juifs de Rome de 1614 a 1798 selon les registres de la 'Casa dei Catecumeni', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 24 (1986), pp. 91–231; 25 (1987), pp. 105–261; 26 (1988) pp. 119–294; W. Rudt de Collenberg, 'Le baptême des musulmans esclaves à Rome aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome*, 101 (1989), pp. 9–181; Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, pp. 93–7; C. Colletta, 'La politica delle conversioni nello Stato della Chiesa in età moderna: fondazione, sviluppi politico-amministrativi e scopi della casa dei catecumeni di Pesaro', in P. C. Ioly Zorattini (ed.), *Percorsi di storia ebraica. Fonti per la storia degli ebrei in Italia nell'età moderna e contemporanea* (Udine: Editrice Universitaria Udinese, 2005), pp. 101–28, 115.

57Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa', pp. 113, 115–6.

58Colletta, 'La politica delle conversioni', p. 125.

59A copy of the decree is in ASM, Gonzaga 3390, f. 866; the decree came just two years after an episode that was frequently cited as a precedent for later decisions, that of the Roman Jew Serampino, who offered one of his children to a Dominican but then retracted his statement, claiming that it was only a joke. Armed with the support of Urban VIII, the rector of the Casa dei catecumeni staged a blitz on Serampino's house in the ghetto and left with two of his children, only to return after their baptism with one of the sons mounted on a horse and followed by a coterie of trumpeters and drummers 'to the great delight of the populace and confoundment of the cursed and obstinate Jewish scoundrels': Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms*, pp. 168–70, 207–8; on the case of the child offered to Clement VIII, see P. Ioly Zorrattini, *I Nomi degli altri. Conversioni a Venezia e nel Friuli Veneto in età moderna* (Florence: Olschki, 2008), p. 44.

60L. Allegra, *Identità in bilico. Il Ghetto di Torino nel Settecento* (Turin: Zamorani, 1996), pp. 21–49; on the eighteenth century 'turn' towards forced baptisms, see Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms*, pp. 73–195 and Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa', pp. 96–114. On the practices of forced baptism and oblation in the German-speaking lands, see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, pp. 141–56.

61M. Caffiero and G. Sermoneta (eds), *Rubare le anime: Diario di Anna del Monte ebrea romana* (Rome: Viella, 2008); Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms*, p. 160.

62M. Luzzati, 'Ancora sull'esumazione del corpo di un bambino ebreo battezzato 'invitis parentibus' e sulla sepoltura nel Camposanto di Pisa (1709)', in C. Mangio and M. Verga (eds), *Il Settecento di Furio Diaz* (Pisa: Plus, 2006), pp. 137–49.

63G. A. Marta, *Consilia doctoris Martae Neapolitani Iurisconsulti Veridici* (Turin, 1628), pp. 290–92; this opinion was cited by the Florentine jurist Pietro Paolo Borromei in a letter regarding the case of Lazzaro Supino, a Jew from Livorno who offered his son to the church in 1670 (ASF, Mediceo del

Principato 5363, cc.nn.); for further treatises against baptism *invitis parentibus*, see ASM, Gonzaga 3390, ff. 775–90, which contains several, including one written by Silvestro Aldobrandini, a Florentine jurist and father of Clement VIII, in 1553; see also Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa', pp. 92–110, appendix A, pp. 176–87, contains a transcription of a rare treatise in favour of these baptisms by Giovan Battista Calici, a Florentine priest, dated 1697.

64On the Livorno charter and the 1668 decree, L. Frattarelli Fischer, *Vivere fuori dal ghetto. Ebrei a Pisa e Livorno (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Turin: Zamorani, 2009), pp. 216–31.

65ASM, Gridario Bastia, vol. 34, f. 23; in 1599, the bishop of Mantua Francesco Gonzaga ordered an investigation into the baptism of a Jewish child against the wishes of his parents, stating that 'this sacrament must be taken voluntarily', and that 'the children of Jews cannot be taken from their parents for baptism when the children are of such an age that they do not possess the use of reason'.: ASDMa, Ebrei, f. 110.

66Balboni, *Gli Ebrei del Finale*, pp. 97–9.

67Marconcini, 'La storia della pia Casa', 117–18.

68ASM, Gonzaga 3361, pages not numbered; on Leon Osimo, A. Perugia Crema, 'Il caso Leon Osimo: un episodio di conversione forzata di infante nel ducato Estense di Modena', *Rassegna Mensile d'Israel*, 46 (1980), pp. 247–67; in the 1750s, the duke of Modena Francesco III named a minister responsible for certifying the intentions of catechumens who carried out investigations analogous to those of Rucellai in Florence, Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, pp. 72–83.

69M. Caffiero, 'Battesimi, libertà, e frontiere. Conversioni di musulmani ed ebrei a Roma in età moderna', *Quaderni Storici*, 126 (2007), pp. 819–39; P. A. Mazur, 'Combating "Mohammedan Indecency": The Baptism of Muslim Slaves in Spanish Naples, 1563–1667', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 13 (2009), pp. 25–48.

70Marconcini, 'La pia casa', p. 13; Al Kalak and Pavan, *Un'altra fede*, pp. 153–206; R. A. Maryks, *Pouring Jewish Water into Fascist Wine: Untold Stories of (Catholic) Jews from the archive of Mussolini's Jesuit Pietro Tacchi Venturi* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 32, 122. A compelling narrative of a famous case of conversion during the Risorgimento is D. I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

2 Superabundant Charity

The Conversion of Protestants

The decision of Henry of Navarre to return to the Catholic Church in 1593 threw the Roman curia into a state of confusion. Clement VIII and his advisors viewed the conversion of the heir to one of Europe's most powerful thrones (he had already converted once before in 1573) not with excitement or celebration but rather with a sense of apprehension and unease. Very few among the cardinals, heads of religious orders, and theologians involved in papal decision making were willing to consider the conversion genuine, and when representatives of the French crown began to appear in Italy to request a full pardon and readmission to the Roman Catholic Church on the king's behalf, the most intransigent members of the clergy—theologians, canon lawyers, and inquisitors—argued that there could be no possible agreement with a traitor and relapsed heretic like Navarre, whose word was unreliable and who was driven back to the church by his own interest rather than by a true desire to repent. Francisco Peña, a Spanish Dominican trained at Salamanca, one of the leading minds of the Roman Inquisition, expressed all of his mistrust for Henry and his willingness to sacrifice any potential political gains for the church in favour of a rigid stand in principle: No pardon could be granted to an untrustworthy soldier who had already converted once to Catholicism, only to abandon it when it became politically necessary.

But Peña's attitude, though impeccable in its interpretation of canon law and consistent with the attitudes of previous popes towards Henry of Navarre, had weaknesses of another kind. Others, including the pope's nephew Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, recognized that there were heavy political and even religious costs to be paid in the event that the church refused to absolve the king entirely. The well-known tendencies of the French church to assert its so-called Gallican liberties could explode into a full-blown schism, making Henry the head of a state church divorced from the see of Peter. And closing its doors to France would leave the papacy even more vulnerable to the tutelage of Philip II, unable to forge any policy independent of Spain. As Rome divided

into *navarristi* and *spagnoli*, Clement faced a profound dilemma which months of consultation and temporizing were unable to resolve. The question of France was as much a question of his own conscience as that of the would-be king's, and in order to assuage it, he turned to his confessor, a priest of the Roman Oratory who was much better known for his historical scholarship than his political acumen or theological learning: Cesare Baronio (1538–1607).[1]

Baronio and the Oratorians had never disguised their sympathy for the French crown, but the task of providing a coherent justification for the absolution of Henry of Navarre, one that would satisfy the pope and silence the inquisitorial party led by Peña, was not a simple one. In order to counter the implacable logic of the law, Baronio turned to what he knew best, the history of the church and the lives of the martyrs who had died in the name of Christian truth and salvation under the persecution of the Roman Empire. In particular, he recalled the example of Cyprian of Carthage, a third century bishop who had led his church through a particularly difficult period—the persecutions of the Emperor Decius, who forced Christians to worship in the pagan temples at pain of death. Decius had succeeded in dividing the church, and not all believers had demonstrated the courage necessary to undergo martyrdom; some had purchased exemptions, others had sought refuge in heresies, and still others abandoned the religion altogether. And when Cyprian attempted to mete out severe punishments for those who lapsed, many of his priests led a revolt against him for what they perceived as his excessive severity. Only when the bishop and his adversaries reached a compromise at a council held in 251, which offered clemency to those who had wavered under threat of violence, did the schism led by the rebellious priests disappear. In the fractured religious landscape of Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, Baronio recognized strong parallels to Cyprian's times, and he counseled the pope to follow his example and abandon severity in favour of reconciliation.

In particular, he borrowed the words of the bishop himself and quoted from the same passages of scripture that he had used over thirteen centuries earlier. While Clement should 'carefully ponder' the words and justifications of those who came before him asking to be re-received into the church, only God, 'the searcher of hearts' (Psalms 7:9), was capable of seeing beyond the surface and understanding their true motivations. Though never explicitly stated, Baronio's message was clear: The pope could only listen to Henry's professions of goodwill and act accordingly; he could never properly understand his true intentions and faith. In his emphasis on the church's power to reconcile over its requirement to judge and condemn, Baronio provided a coherent theological basis for withholding judgment in the case of a notorious heretic.[2]

The *Apologeticus*, as Baronio's brief was called, was read all over Rome, and most contemporary observers credited it with finally convincing Clement VIII

to allow the absolution of Henry of Navarre and put an end to the political crisis that had enveloped the city for months. On September 17, 1595, a ceremony was held in St Peter's that formalized Henry of Navarre's abjuration of Calvinism and his reacceptance into the Catholic fold. The king himself was not present; despite the importance of the moment for legitimizing his rulership, two French bishops took the monarch's place in abjuring 'impious and wicked Calvinism', reciting the profession of faith, and promising to complete a series of penances, which included the restoration of Catholicism in France and the Bearn, daily attendance at mass, daily recitation of prayers, and confession and communion four times a year. When the ceremony ended, the *Te Deum* was sung in the church, cannon shots were fired in celebration, and the French representatives moved in procession to the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, the French national church, where further celebrations in honor of the king and the pope were held. For the role he played in bringing the affair to an acceptable conclusion, Baronio was given a silver reliquary by Henry IV and named to the College of Cardinals by the pope.[3]

The debate surrounding the absolution of Henry IV has traditionally been understood as a political crisis that was resolved through theological means, and Baronio's report as a response to an exceptional situation without any evident implications for other Protestants or potential converts. Yet the way in which the affair was resolved was to have repercussions on the way the church, and in particular the church in Italy, approached Protestants for years to come. Whether or not it was part of his intentions when writing it, the *Apologeticus* became a brief for a new policy of engagement with the Protestant world, one in which the harshest judicial tools of the Holy Office were set aside in favour of a more subjective appeal based on persuasion, reconciliation, and charity, as well as the personal charisma of men like Baronio. No longer simply enemies to be defeated and humiliated, Protestants were now recognized for their potential as spokesmen for the church, whose religious transformation made them into powerful symbols of the truth of Catholicism.

The most direct outcome of this distinct shift in attitudes towards the Protestant world was the construction of a network of institutes specifically dedicated to the conversion of 'heretics' that provided the same kinds of shelter, instruction, and social and economic patronage that were already available for Jews and Muslims. From modest beginnings, the members of the clergy who supported a softer, more diplomatic approach to the members of the evangelical churches slowly overcame the resistance of the intransigent faction that had dominated the curia since the 1540s. And just as the catechumen houses had slowly acquired the consensus of local élites in the sixteenth century, a parallel network of institutes for Protestants, based on a

model developed in Rome, slowly permeated the major cities of Northern and Central Italy.

* * *

Baronio's partner in this enterprise was Giovenale Ancina, who like him had entered the oratory in the 1570s and earned a reputation as a charismatic ascetic, a 'lightning bolt through all of Rome', who had been especially active as a preacher and confessor.[4] Ancina came from Fossano in the marchesate of Saluzzo, in Northern Italy, a small principality which had been overrun by the French at the beginning of the century and only later came into the orbit of the duke of Savoy. It was a territory that bordered the Alps and a place of transit and refuge for Waldensians and French Protestants from the Dauphiné, a religious frontier that had suffered heavily from incursions during the French wars of religion. More than most members of the Roman clergy, Ancina had come to know heresy as something more than a theological abstraction and as a human problem of profound social and political dimensions.[5]

In the 1590s, Ancina began to turn his attention back to Savoy, where François de Sales had taken advantage of the duke's recapture of the Chablais and the southern shore of Lake Geneva to launch an effort to bring the area back into the Catholic camp and put pressure on the city of Geneva itself. In Thonon, François de Sales had begun to welcome and catechize a growing number of Calvinist refugees and the promise of even greater conquests, including the prospect of converting the 'Calvinist pope', the head of the Genevan consistory, Theodore Beza, who had attracted the interest of many in Rome, including Clement VIII.[6] Ancina was among the main correspondents in Rome of François de Sales, and when in 1599 the future saint proposed the foundation of a hospice for converted heretics in Thonon, a place where they could find shelter and religious instruction, he helped to secure papal support for what would come to be known as the Sainte-Maison.[7]

The following year, in the midst of a papal jubilee that brought tens of thousands of travellers from all over Europe to St Peter's, Ancina created a second institution for the same purpose in Rome. The Congregation of St Mary of Compassion, or of the Seven Wounds, was established in the small parish church of Ss. Simone e Giuda behind the Oratorian headquarters at Santa Maria della Vallicella. As one of its members wrote, the confraternity was intended

> for the honor of God and the utility of our fellows in conversion of poor converts of Geneva and of other nations who have come to Rome, and through divine mercy have come to detest their most enormous errors and false opinions and to reduce themselves into the bosom of the holy church.[8]

Under the leadership of Ancina and Cherubino da Moriana, a Capuchin friar who had been active in Thonon, the congregation's members included representatives of some of the most powerful factions in papal Rome—the Savoyard ambassador, the nuncio to Savoy; as well as the Spanish ambassador; and Marcello Lante della Rovere, auditor of the Apostolic Chamber.

The records of the congregation make it clear that its role was not to persuade Protestants to convert—they were expected to present themselves to the Holy Office and abjure their heresy first—but rather to supplement their formal abjuration with instruction and spiritual guidance in order to ensure that they remained solidly within the Catholic Church. The congregation, both clergy and converts, were to meet once a week on Saturdays in the church, where they listened to sermons and discussed religious themes and prayed together 'for the extirpation of heresies'. But in addition to their souls, the congregation was interested in the everyday lives of the converts and in their reintroduction into society. The converts were to be favoured through recommendations and offers of employment, and their behavior, both their religious habits and moral conduct, was closely observed. Among the employees of the congregation were visitors to the sick, interpreters, and decurions, who kept a list of the names of all of the converts living in Rome and called upon them regularly to make sure that they attended its meetings.[9]

During the intense two years following the jubilee of 1600, while Ancina led the congregation and Baronio continued his battle against Protestantism in print, both men surrounded themselves with a group of recent converts. Their relationships were cast in explicitly paternalistic terms, and the Oratorians attempted to play the role of generous and comprehending fathers to the prodigal sons who appealed to them for favours and assistance. From the nameless Bohemian who sought Ancina's help in securing an introduction to Cardinal Dietrichstein, whom he hoped would help him to find a position in his native country, to the 'blessed nephew of the cursed Calvin' Étienne de la Favergue, who under Ancina's guidance became a convert and a Carmelite monk, Rome was full of converts from Protestantism who attempted, with varying degrees of success, to begin new lives within Catholic society, either in Italy or in other Catholic territories in Europe.[10] The Oratorians were especially active in using their networks within the city, in the curia, in the religious orders, and among the diplomatic representatives of the European monarchies, to find opportunities for the converts in universities, religious orders, and the courts of Catholic rulers both in Italy and beyond.

Baronio, in particular, surrounded himself with a group of converts who shared his intellectual interests and possessed the necessary skills to carry forward his anti-Protestant polemics in other forms. The cardinal granted his support to pamphleteers, such as Guillaume Reboul, whose affronts to

members of the French nobility earned him a capital sentence for *lesa maiestas* in 1611, and Kaspar Schoppe, whose highly personal attacks on his religious and intellectual rivals earned him numerous admirers and detractors within the Republic of Letters. Henri de Sponde (1568–1643), a former official at the court of Henry of Navarre who converted in 1595 and travelled to Rome for the jubilee, engaged in an even more sustained collaboration with the cardinal. After several years in Rome, de Sponde became a priest, took a position in the papal bureaucracy, and began to cultivate the patronage of Baronio, publishing an *Epitome* of the *Annals* in 1617 and then a continuation that began where the last volume of Baronio's text had ended and brought the history of the church to the present day.[11]

In this crowded entourage, one convert stood out for the role his conversion played in Catholic propaganda and the way his story came to symbolize the new relationship between Rome and the Protestant world: Justus Kahl, a former professor at the University of Heidelberg who converted to Catholicism after reading Baronio's *Annales*. Following his conversion, Kahl began an extended correspondence with Baronio, Roberto Bellarmino, and the pope himself, recounting his struggles against what he called 'the lies of the innovators' (*novatorum mendacia*) and the difficulties he faced in his new role as a Catholic.[12] Because he came from one of the academic strongholds of the Reformation, and because of the (perhaps intentional) misperception that Kahl was a blood relative of Calvin himself, the Roman curia went out of its way to cultivate the professor and encourage him. 'As you enter onto the field of combat, flanked by your judges Augustine and Cyprian', Baronio wrote to the convert in 1601, 'you have nothing to fear, but should rather be glad and exalt, for even if you suffer in defence of the Catholic faith it will have been worthwhile'.[13] The following year, he made a pilgrimage to Rome and was hosted by the cardinal in his palace. After receiving the sacrament of confirmation from Clement VIII, Kahl changed his last name from Calvinus, a Latinized distortion which evoked a supposed relationship with the reformer, to Baronius, in honor of his new godfather, and returned to Germany.

From his new position in Mainz, at the court of the prince-bishop, Kahl mounted an unprecedented campaign of propaganda to defend his name against Calvinist polemicists who called him 'an apostate, the slave of Baal, bought for gold and deceived by ambition'.[14] In two publications, the first a series of *Catholic Letters* to Catholic missionaries and theologians, as well as figures from the imperial court and the Roman curia, including Baronio, and then in an *Apology for the Catholic Religion and His Own Transmigration to It*, Kahl provided readers with a sophisticated piece of propaganda that advertised the new Roman policies and crafted a compelling narrative of his conversion, his pilgrimage to Rome by way of Milan, Bologna, and Loreto, and the

hospitality he received at the papal court. The city of Rome, 'the beloved mother of mercy', where 'kindness begat kindness, and love begat love' was described in Kahl's letters as a place of magnificence and piety beyond words, where one could not look in any direction without seeing the sacred monuments and ruins of the past. Even the feared tribunal of the Inquisition, the subject of extensive anti-Catholic propaganda, appeared as a benign institution that treated the repentant with respect. Kahl even included a facsimile of the certificate given to him by the inquisitor in the text, a way of demonstrating as concretely as possible the contrast between the real, bureaucratic functions of the Holy Office and the grotesque imagery of it produced for Protestant consumption.[15]

This remarkable experiment in the conversion of Protestants came to a premature end when Clement VIII sent Ancina back to Piedmont to become bishop of Saluzzo. Without his leadership, the congregation he founded suffered a number of setbacks and entered into decline. In 1603, the priest of the church of Ss. Simone e Giuda wrote a frantic letter to Ancina, warning him that the house that the congregation used to provide lodging for the converts had become a den of scandal; its administrator had insulted the men living there as Lutherans and allowed the moral regimen of the place to collapse. He claimed that he had seen 'whores with flasks of wine' entering and exiting the house.[16] In 1605, the Congregation of the Holy Office ordered an inspection of the house and removed the administrator, Giulio Brancadoro, after they found him inflating the expenses of the institute for his own benefit, in collusion with several of the converts.[17]

The distinctive mixture of charitable works and charismatic leadership that characterized the first years of the congregation under Ancina was not destined to last long beyond his departure from Rome. But despite the fact that it only lasted a few years, the experience of the Oratorians and the Protestants in Rome continued to exercise a powerful influence on the imaginations of members of the Catholic clergy and laity who confronted Protestants in the cities of the peninsula in the years and decades that followed. After years in which the papacy rejected both Protestants and their doctrines, Baronio and Ancina had recognized the opportunities that could be created by a more subtle strategy that distinguished between the members of the Reformed churches, who were to be treated with compassion, and the ideas of Luther and Calvin, which were to be condemned as vigorously as in the past.

In particular, the strong connection that Ancina drew between the traditional works of mercy—the duty of the faithful to welcome strangers, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked—and the conversion of Protestants, was destined to remain a powerful precedent in the years that followed. As one of the witnesses in his first canonization trial remembered:

> In the letters that [Ancina] often wrote to me, he recommended with great affection the importance of the duty to provide hospitality, and he said to me that he wished that these poor converts might be received by all with *superabundant charity*, so that when they returned to their countries they might be able to tell of Christian charity, and stimulate the heretics to convert and become Catholics …[18]

This argument was repeated frequently over the course of the century by officials and benefactors of other institutes of conversion and was echoed in the words of some of the most desperate converts as they appealed to members of the clergy for money and favours, reminding them of the damage to the image of the church if they were to be found 'naked and starving', begging for alms in the streets.[19] In the vision of the Oratorians and their successors, Rome, and all of Italy, could be transformed into a stage on which the drama of the return of the prodigal son could be repeated time and again, a spectacle that reaffirmed the centrality of works in salvation and demonstrated the superiority of the Catholic Church over its rivals.

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It fell to Federico Borromeo (1564–1631), the archbishop of Milan who as a young man had been a follower of Filippo Neri and the first Oratorians, to develop these strategies of conversion in ways more concrete and lasting than his predecessors. Borromeo had been an interested, if marginal, participant in Ancina's initiatives at the end of the sixteenth century. He had helped to gather funds and support for the Sainte-Maison in Thonon, been a member of the Roman congregation, and corresponded with Ancina about individual converts.[20] The problem of conversion and religious coexistence was a particularly acute issue for him, as his diocese extended into the Swiss cantons to remote valleys where the Reformed Church had made strong inroads. Furthermore, the vicinity of the Simplon and St Gotthard passes, two of the main routes over the Alps, made the city of Milan into a major point of entry for goods, troops, and travellers into Italy, and the city maintained commercial agreements with several Swiss Protestant cantons that allowed their merchants to reside and do business there.[21]

These factors undoubtedly made Borromeo particularly sensitive to the problem of heresy in the city, and as the leader of a local church that had been traditionally independent from Rome, he possessed the authority and resources to create an institution that could overcome the obstacles that Ancina had faced. In 1604, he obtained an apostolic brief decreeing the suppression of the parish of San Vincenzo and the devolution of its rents and property to a new institution to be founded on the site, the Collegio degli Alunni (the institute was subsequently known by a series of other names: the Collegio dei Neofiti, the Ospizio dei Catecumeni, and the Casa degli Eretici). In 1618, the rector of

the hospice, Gabriele Pionnio, purchased a second house and garden 'near the Osteria della Foppa at Porta Comasina' for the price of 4,450 ducats and moved the institute to this location, where it remained until 1728.[22] The new house lay immediately inside the northernmost city gate, directly on the route that led towards Lake Como and the Alpine passes beyond it, a strategic location where incoming converts might be intercepted and where information and goods coming from the north were likely to pass for the first time. This was reason enough to choose the neighborhood as the site for the institution, but the symbolic importance of the nearby basilica of San Simpliciano, the alleged location of St Augustine's conversion in 386 and the site of a chapel dedicated to the martyrs of Aunonia, three Christian missionaries sent by Ambrose to evangelize the Alpine valleys, may have also played a role in its selection. The church's association with the institute suggested a continuity between the Milanese church under Ambrose and its seventeenth-century incarnation that would have greatly appealed to Borromeo, who shared the Oratorians' fascination with Christian archaeology and the history of the early church.[23]

The objectives of the institute were stated in regulations drawn up by Borromeo in 1604. Initially, admission to the college was limited to boys between the ages of seven and eighteen who were either 'heretics, the sons of heretics, or in danger of being perverted by heretics' and could demonstrate their poverty and desire for schooling, though exceptions could be made for Jews and Muslims of the same age.[24] The archbishop envisioned the institute as a training ground for future members of the clergy who would themselves combat heresy in the areas of his diocese that were populated by heretics or further north, in the heartlands of Calvinism and Lutheranism, and the first students who requested admission to the institute were young men who had rebelled against their families for religious reasons and sought refuge and the possibility of an education.[25] In 1608, Cardinal Biandrate di San Giorgio fervently recommended a recent convert from Paderborn who had abjured before the Holy Office in Rome and was now headed towards Milan:

> I beg you to favour him with a place [in the college] so that he might continue his studies, and with the help of God be able in some time to convert others, out of gratitude for his own good fortune.[26]

Over time, however, the institute's leaders opted to expand its mission in order to serve a broader group of potential users, and in 1650, it began to admit adults, including women.[27]

The college was placed under the control of six deputies appointed by the archbishop, three laymen and three members of the clergy, who were required to meet once a week to discuss the affairs of the institute and visit it regularly; a rector administered the college's day-to-day affairs. From 1625 onward, the college was placed under the control of a single official, the procurator and

general conservator of the college, who was almost always selected from among the canons of the cathedral chapter.[28] The most delicate moment of any conversion, the abjuration which marked the abandonment of heresy and the formal entry into the Catholic Church, was administered in Milan by the inquisitor, following the protocol established in Rome, though he was often supported or substituted by the administrator of the college, the archbishop's theologian, or the so-called 'confessori delle lingue', German-speaking friars who heard confessions in the city's cathedral and maintained close ties with the local expatriate German community; the first to appear in the records is the Bavarian Seraphim Seerieder, an Augustinian friar active between 1688 and 1702, and in the eighteenth century his place was taken by the Dominicans Florian Donath and Canuto Scope. The confessors, by speaking to Protestants in their own language and approaching them in informal settings, applied a kind of soft pressure to convert that was well suited to the aims of the institute.[29]

No register of converts survives from the Milanese hospice, but the accounts of the institution, which provide the names, places of origin, and former religious identities of many of the converts, together with the amount of time they spent in the college and the expenses incurred on their behalf, provide a revealing, if incomplete, statistical sample of the college's activity. Of the ninety-two conversions that were recorded in these accounts between 1650 and 1699, the vast majority, eighty, were of either Calvinists or Lutherans, while only seven Jewish and two Muslim converts are recorded in the same period; another three converts are not clearly identified.[30] Their provenance varied, but most of the converts were *oltramontani* from Germany and the Swiss cantons, though a smaller number also came from France, the Dutch Republic, and England, including 'Jacques Clinton de la ville de Bristol' and 'Eva Robie Ibernese'. The records also record a handful of more exotic cases, such as that of Barbara Comenish 'born in Brada da Petash in the state of Romonschi', a Lutheran who converted during her recovery from an illness in one of the city's hospitals, or of Moses Moties, a Jew from the Maghreb who was baptized after thirty days in the college in January 1684. The Muslims, such as 'Braim Alemet Algerino … who came to Milan to abandon the false law of Mohammed and embrace the Holy Catholic Faith', mostly appear to have been slaves who were already living in Italy.[31]

Once admitted to the college, Calvinists and Lutherans were ordinarily granted twelve days of food and lodging, in order to prepare for abjuration, though in some cases this period was extended. For Jews and Muslims, the stay was inevitably longer, in order to prepare them for baptism, and typically ran around the forty days that had been previously established by the regulations of the catechumen houses. Frequently the administrators of the college

purchased clothing and other necessities for the converts and paid for their medical care if necessary; when the converts were housed outside of the hospice, they covered the expenses of placing them in an inn or with a private boarder. The administrators of the hospice usually avoided distributing funds to converts directly, and the regulations of the institute also forbade providing funds after the period of instruction and conversion had been completed, though this was sometimes ignored.[32]

This system was not without its problems, many of which were brought to light by the administrator of the college, Angelo Maria Durini, in a long report written for the archbishop in 1749. It was difficult to establish the identity of the converts who 'usually, or rather always, come without any documentation that could prove who they are', and as a result, more than a few had lied about their backgrounds and reasons for seeking conversion; some had even repeated baptism or abjuration multiple times before different authorities.[33] In February 1740, a convert from Calvinism named Anna Formis confessed that she had used a false name, Rosa Duprè, when she first approached the institute for assistance and religious instruction, and a month later, a German was expelled from the college after 'well-founded doubts were raised regarding the truth of what he said'.[34] Though heavy penalties, including imprisonment, were prescribed for those who lied about their backgrounds or religious identities, there were plenty of conversions that were overshadowed by doubts of this kind and a few cases of outright fraud.

More importantly, Durini saw a fundamental problem in the relationship between charity and conversion, which in many cases degenerated into a mere transaction. Many converts saw the institute as little more than a way out of a situation of poverty and social marginality, and it often took little more than the most basic questioning to recognize that many of them lacked any stable residence or profession. And once they had converted, they seemed to have more had interest in the material benefits of conversion than in their personal spiritual development or in understanding the tenets of the religion to which they had converted. He complained that not only were these opportunists draining the wealth of the institute, their behavior was a grave sin, a 'low traffic' that mixed the sacred and the profane.[35] Under Durini's guidance, the institute developed a more rigorous and standardized procedure for admission, requiring each convert to submit documentation that demonstrated his or her place of origin, family background, and confessional identity. Furthermore, converts were submitted to a 'rigorous examination' that included questions about their family background, motivations for converting, and reasons for being in Milan.[36]

Even when a conversion was successful, there were other problems to overcome. As their colleagues in other parts of Italy discovered before and

after them, the administrators of the hospice in Milan came to recognize that the key to a lasting conversion lay in a well-established social identity and source of income for the convert after he or she had received instruction and completed the necessary ceremonies. For men, this inevitably meant finding a profession, often based on whatever skills they possessed or previous experience they could claim. The administrators sometimes provided small sums of money or purchased the necessary tools for the converts to practice their trade and helped them to find work as apprentices or assistants with local shop owners.[37] In the case of women, either marriage or admission to a conservatory for reformed prostitutes or a convent were the most obvious solutions, and the administrators of the hospice frequently played as go-betweens who arranged marriages between local men, such as Giuseppe Penaglia, a childless widower who worked as a coachman and practiced several other trades, including carpentry and basketry, and Domenica Reicin, an impoverished Swiss convert.[38]

The Milanese hospice united the religious ideals of Baronio and Ancina with a more ambitious institutional plan that aimed not only to sustain converts after their conversion but to also provide a model of spiritual guidance, doctrinal education, and social assimilation that would accompany a convert from the moment he or she entered the city and follow his or her path towards social assimilation and religious normalization continuously, even after the ceremony of abjuration. Furthermore, under the control of a strong archbishop who was also a member of the Roman curia, the administrators of the hospice were able to find a way to allow their institute to coexist and even collaborate with the local tribunal of the Holy Office rather than compete with it. There is very little sign of any conflict between the two, and by the mid-eighteenth century, a well-worn and uncontroversial division of labor appears to have taken hold.[39]

* * *

Just as the catechumen house had proven an effective model for the conversion of Jews and Muslims, the Milanese hospice was imitated in other places that faced the problem of individuating and converting members of the Protestant churches in large numbers. In Turin, the capital of the Duchy of Savoy, a city whose rapid expansion at the beginning of the seventeenth century occurred in the midst of the ruling house's ongoing attempts to impose religious uniformity, an Ospizio dei Catecumeni 'to receive heretics that come to the holy faith so that they might be instructed and fed for some time', was founded in 1648 by Cardinal Francesco Antonio Ceva, who donated 3,500 scudi and rents from properties in Lombardy and Piedmont to sustain the institute.

By 1657, the local inquisitor reported to the Congregation of the Holy Office that most of the converts had been put to work by the administrators of the hospice after their abjurations, 'not only to reduce them more easily to the Catholic faith, but to keep them alive'. His successor developed an even more ambitious plan to use surplus income from the hospice's rents for the construction of a silk loom in a series of adjacent buildings, a potentially profitable enterprise that could help to sustain the institution and provide a form of moral education for the converts.[40]

In 1668, the bishop of Como wrote to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to announce that a group of laymen and women had begun a new charity designed 'to pull some lost lambs into the flock of Christ our saviour'. A number of young women had recently arrived in the city from the surrounding countryside after fleeing from their families, who refused to allow them to become Catholics, and these pious citizens had begun to donate money to sustain them, while the local Jesuits had taken an interest in providing instruction and spiritual counsel to the women. The bishop explained that the city could not support by itself the expense of housing and providing dowries for all of the women, and he appealed to the congregation for a stable source of income that could provide the basis for a new institute, a conservatory for the recovery and education of female converts.[41]

Finally, a hospice was founded in Rome in 1673, as a touchstone to reforms that were intended to emphasize the city's role as a place of refuge and hospitality for Protestant travellers and persuade them to convert. From new regulations meant to protect foreign visitors from fraud and theft, the revitalization of the congregation founded by Ancina, and the creation of a new symbolic language that included the figurative embrace of Bernini's colonnade at St Peter's under Alexander VII, Roman clergy took a number of measures to favour the conversion of Protestants in Rome, and the *Ospizio dei Convertendi*, founded shortly after the pontiff's death, fit perfectly into this scheme by offering religious instruction, hospitality, and social assistance to converts, particularly those from lower social classes. The first converts to enter the hospice were a pair of destitute German students found by an Austrian priest at the steps of the Trinità dei Monti, where in his words, 'having exhausted every human assistance, not knowing what to do, with tears in their eyes asked for my help and counsel'.[42]

The 1,863 men and women who passed through the hospice before the turn of the century experienced a strict regimen that was based not only on the monastic outlook of its founders, but on the accumulated experience of other institutes, including the Roman Casa dei Catecumeni and the Sainte-Maison in Thonon. Rising at dawn, the converts began the day with fifteen minutes of prayer, followed by mass, private study, and catechism until midday. The

afternoon included further catechism, and weekly visits to the seven pilgrimage churches of the city were also obligatory during the period spent in the hospice. At the same time, the rectors of the institute and the members of the confraternity that oversaw it gave particular attention to the problem of creating a stable existence outside of the institute for their charges, operating a kind of employment agency that could guarantee a stable income and dignified social position to the converts once they left. The institute attempted to prepare converts for careers in one of four types of work—the clergy, arms, trades, and service to a nobleman or prelate—and maintained a network of contacts across the city of Rome and further afield that allowed them to find opportunities for the converts to work. The administrators of the hospice emphasized more than once that converts did not simply constitute a burden on the finances of the church but also represented an asset to Italian commerce and intellectual life, as they frequently brought with them trade secrets and technology that would not have otherwise been available.[43]

The last of the major institutes for the conversion of Protestants was founded in Florence by Domenico Melani (1634–1693), a *castrato* singer and composer who from 1653 was resident at the court of the Elector of Saxony in Dresden. Based largely on his musical talent, Melani was able to acquire a vast fortune and aristocratic titles in Saxony, and he used part of his money to host *oltramontani*, mainly pilgrims, in his household in Florence, where as many as twenty guests arrived in a single day.[44] In 1688, he purchased a separate house in the city and transformed it into the Ospizio di Gesù, Maria, e Giuseppe, commonly known as the Ospizio de' Melani. The institute was intended for *oltramontani* headed towards Rome, Loreto, and Santiago (the project initially included a plan to make the hospice available to veterans of the Turkish wars and travelling missionaries as well).[45] As such, it was dedicated to German Catholics as much as Protestants, but its statutes gave it a clear vocation towards converts and included detailed provisions for their treatment, with the stipulation that its charity was intended for those who had already converted rather than those who desired to do so. Once they had demonstrated to the rector of the house that they had abjured their heresy, they were to be given three nights room and board in the hospice. Like many of the other institutes, it was strategically located on the Via San Gallo, the major northward route into the city, where it could be easily found by arriving pilgrims.[46] In 1689, the Dominican provincial of Tuscany told Cosimo III de' Medici of his plans to open 'a hospice of our religion to receive *oltramontani* ' in Livorno, the free port on the Tuscan coast through which many northern travellers arrived.[47]

Melani's institute, unlike those that preceded it, was a lay initiative that was largely undertaken without the involvement of church authorities. It seems to have been more the product of the Catholic zeal of its founder and of the

reigning duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III, who helped to fund it with donations and tax exemptions, as well as an extension of Melani's role as a mediator between the two courts and between Protestant Germany and Catholic Italy. His activities included serving as an agent for artists and musicians who moved between the two capitals, and in both Dresden and Florence, he made his household into a center of Catholic proselytism and assistance to Catholics in Protestant lands. He kept a copy of passages of the Bible translated into German, which he used as testimony of the primacy of the Roman pontificate, and from at least the 1660s, routinely provided money and personal assistance to converts in Germany and Italy.[48] Most importantly, he played an important role in the conversion of several members of the Saxon aristocracy. To a certain extent, the construction of the hospice simply provided an institutional support to an ongoing cross-border effort to convert Protestants and defend the Catholic faith that was based in the Medici court.

* * *

The *ospizi* were the most obvious manifestation of the change in approach to Northern European Protestants that was first formulated by Baronio at the beginning of the century, but they were mainly intended for those who had already made the decision to convert and for the indigent, for whom conversion provided access, however temporary, to the basic necessities of life and the possibility for further assimilation into Italian society. By themselves, the hospices were insufficient to confront the range of challenges that members of this group posed to ecclesiastical authorities. The sheer volume of travel by Protestants in the peninsula, their tendency to migrate from one place to another, and the dissimulation they employed in a range of situations to hide their religious identities and motives, forced the ecclesiastical authorities to develop other strategies to confront the heretics present in the Italian peninsula, to uncover their identities when they attempted to hide them, and force them to convert or to abandon Italian territory. On the one hand, there existed the impulse to certify, prosecute, and, when necessary, inflict penalties that best characterized the activities of the Inquisition and on the other, the strategy, typical of missionaries, to persuade, convince, and assimilate the foreigners in their midst. These two parallel strategies could complement one another, but they also came into conflict.

The repeated attempts of the Congregation of the Holy Office to impose a ban on travel by Protestants in Italy remained a dead letter, compromised by numerous pieces of local legislation and commercial policies that created open ports in cities such as Livorno, Nice, and Civitavecchia, and overcome by the sheer volume of travellers from Northern Europe who came to Italian cities in

numbers too large for any early modern bureaucracy to control.[49] Somewhat more effective were the attempts of bishops and inquisitors to place spies and informers in foreign embassies, taverns, and inns in major cities where they could report on the comings and goings of their guests; even parish priests occasionally recorded the presence of heretics who lived openly in their neighborhoods. These initiatives could occasionally reveal the presence of members of the Reformed churches who were travelling in Italy unannounced and without safe conduct or protection, or those who fomented 'scandal' by attacking the Catholic Church or promoting Reformed doctrines. In some cases, the denunciations of spies or familiars of the Inquisition could lead to prosecution for a range of crimes related to heresy and to an eventual abjuration.

But in their attempt to contrast what Irene Fosi has described as the 'disturbing mobility' of Protestants in Italy, ecclesiastical authorities recognized the enormity, if not the impossibility, of the task before them and concentrated their efforts on distinct social groups: The main objects of their attention were the members of foreign aristocratic and royal families travelling in Italy.[50] In 1625, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide sent instructions to representatives of the church in a number of cities, encouraging them to pay special attention to the members of the Protestant aristocracy present in Italy who frequently came as part of their education, either in the courts of the ruling families or in the universities, particularly Padua. The document proposed the appointment of individuals who could identify and communicate with Northern European nobles, not in order to denounce them to the Holy Office but rather to 'caress them with demonstrations of affection that might better dispose them towards Catholics'. They sought missionaries capable of speaking the native languages of German, Dutch, and Scandinavian nobles, who could accompany them in the cities where they resided and gradually acquire their confidence.

> It would not be difficult to win some of them over, as these peoples are of a facile nature, and capable of true virtue, and by converting some, they could return to their homelands and open the path to missionaries to disseminate the Catholic religion among their friends, relatives, and countrymen.[51]

Similar arguments were advanced in a 1636 letter from the Capuchin Zaccaria da Saluzzo to the secretary of Propaganda Fide Francesco Ingoli, regarding the sons of the royal doctor to Christian IV of Denmark, who had recently arrived in Genoa. The older of two brothers, Assuerus, had been sent by his father to Holland, with express instructions that he not proceed further south, but curiosity led him to Louvain, where he 'began to doubt the verity of his sect', and to Paris, 'where finally he abjured the sect of Luther and became a Catholic', and finally to Genoa, where he entered the Capuchin monastery of

San Barnaba and took religious vows. His younger brother Christian left Denmark shortly afterwards and came to Genoa, where 'according to the same divine commandment, he too fell into the apostolic nets and from a Lutheran was made a catechized Catholic and received into the bosom of the holy church'. Though only twenty years old and lacking in education, Christian was 'of most noble manners and beloved by all who saw him'.[52]

The friar emphasized both the costs and opportunities presented by this striking and unexpected victory for the church. Christian, in particular, was in need of a stipend that would allow him to continue to live in Italy, because his father was likely to stop sending money and force the son to return to home, 'where it is not permitted to live except as a Lutheran'. On the other hand, the letters to members of the family in Denmark that fra Zaccaria had dictated to Assuerus had received encouraging responses. There was reason to hope, Zaccaria argued, that the two brothers could gradually persuade their relatives to abandon heresy and become Catholics. 'With the grace of God', he concluded, 'it might even spread to the person of the king, to whom the doctor is most dearly beloved, and from him to the rest of the kingdom'. Perhaps encouraged by Christian IV's ambiguous foreign policy in the latter stages of the Thirty Years' War, the Capuchin saw in the fortuitous arrival of two members of the Danish royal court the opportunity to launch a missionary effort capable of overturning one of the most fully confessionalized states of Northern Europe, a kingdom where Lutheranism had arrived early and taken over completely.[53]

Over the course of the seventeenth century, ecclesiastical authorities' increasing awareness of the mobility of the *oltramontani* who arrived in Northern Italy led them to experiment with strategies to intercept Protestants wandering across the territory. Religious orders, often with the cooperation of civil authorities, began to establish permanent posts for confessors who spoke foreign languages in cities that hosted large numbers of travelers and merchants from the north. In addition to the German language confessors in the Cathedral of Milan, at the request of Cosimo III de' Medici, the Barnabites and Dominicans placed a German confessor in Livorno in 1683.[54] In Florence, the Holy Office depended on a number of regular clerics from abroad to interpret the words of converts who had come before the tribunal to abjure their beliefs: Francis Bermingham, an Irish priest, the Augustinian Aurelio Hochen, and the Jesuit Francis Sidel.[55]

Also important were the unofficial or semi-official intermediaries who worked on behalf of the church in positions of visibility and prestige, particularly in the courts. Lukas Holste (1596–1661), born a Lutheran in Hamburg, became a client of the Barberini in Rome in the 1630s, where his intellectual abilities and status as a convert earned him the favour of a series of

popes and their families and eventually an appointment as head of the Vatican library. Holste's fame and connections within the curia made him a point of reference for the German community in the city, and he also helped to encourage and protect converts in Germany through an extensive network of correspondents who included members of the high aristocracy and electoral families. In 1655, Alexander VII sent him to meet Christina of Sweden in Innsbruck, where she formally abjured Lutheranism as a guest of the Habsburgs and began her journey south towards Rome.[56] Similar figures existed in other courts, especially Florence, where the Medici placed the cultural prestige of their city at the service of the church. Men such as the Flemish diplomat Daniel Eremita and the English aristocrat and military engineer Robert Dudley (1574–1649) permanently decamped to Florence, where they enjoyed offices, pensions, and extensive privileges; as converts, all these men became symbols of Catholic redemption and victory in the highly theatrical world of the Baroque court, but they also served the more concrete role of providing a conduit of information between Italy and their homelands.[57]

One of Holste's clients, the Saxon nobleman Christoph von Rantzau, wrote a letter recounting his conversion during the jubilee of 1650; he attributed his conversion both to the example of authoritative teachers such as Holste, 'a man of singular learning and humanity … who abhors every futile sophism and wordplay' and to the contrast between the Catholic unity that the city displayed during the jubilee and the division of the multiplicity of Reformed churches. Describing his visit to St Peter's, he wrote

> Here, among every people and nation it was easy to see how far the Catholic Church stands apart from private factions and sects: men and women of every faith and every language were united by the sole bonds of charity and faith.

Like Baronio before him, the German aristocrat borrowed heavily from Cyprian as he argued for the greater antiquity and unity of the Catholic Church over its rivals.[58] Originally addressed to his former teacher at the University of Helmstedt, Rantzau's letter was later published in Germany and in Rome itself, where the officials of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide recognized its value as a short and effective advertisement and ordered that it be distributed to northern travellers arriving in the city in the hope that they would be persuaded by its arguments.[59]

* * *

By the end of the seventeenth century, an infrastructure of institutes of conversion, confessors, and missionaries had been created that had proven

surprisingly effective at intercepting and converting Northern European Protestants. It only partially overlapped with the existing network of catechumen houses; while in some cities, the hospices also accepted Jewish and Muslim converts, the target groups and operating procedures of the two types of institutes were different, and in at least two cities, Rome and Florence, the two existed alongside one another, a tacit acknowledgement of their separate roles. Furthermore, after an initial period of controversy, the hospices, their administrators, and supporters managed to define a clear role for the institutes that could not be conceived as a violation of the jurisdiction or aims of the Inquisition. During this long period of coexistence and frequent cooperation, the opposition between the judicial methods of the Holy Office and the affective and charismatic approach of men such as Baronio and his successors appeared far less drastic than it had at the time of the conversion of Henry IV. Each offered a separate array of instruments for the church to approach, persuade, and coerce Protestants who crossed in ever-increasing numbers into a territory which they were formally prohibited from entering.

As in the case of the catechumen houses, the experiments in the conversion of Protestants in Italy did not go unnoticed outside of its borders. In 1610, Antonio Albergati, who as Borromeo's vicar had been involved in the earliest stages of the foundation of the Collegio dei Neofiti, was named papal nuncio to Cologne, and the following year he helped to found the *Passionsbruderschaft*, a lay confraternity for the conversion of heretics located in the local Capuchin church. The confraternity was one of many enterprises that the nuncio encouraged in order to bring the city under the sway of a more resolutely Counter-Reformation spirituality and ecclesiastical government, and by all appearances, it was inspired by a very similar vision to the one behind the institute in Milan. Before long, Albergati sent news of the numerous 'fruits' of the confraternity's work, including a 'nobleman of Denmark, a youngster of twelve years of age, who after the holidays will be sent to the university in Bologna, a husband and wife from Lübeck with their two children, and two others of a lower condition'. Within the first decade of its existence, the confraternity received large donations from members of the local Catholic aristocracy, including the prince-bishop of Cologne.[60]

In France, the legacy of these institutes may have been even more extensive. A series of *Compagnies de la propagation de la foi* were founded in many of the major cities of the kingdom, especially in those parts of the south where heresy had been widespread (Aix, Nimes, Lyon, Montpellier, and Grenoble) between 1632 and 1650. Their originator was the Capuchin père Hyacinthe de Paris, a figure closely connected to the court of Louis XIII who had spent a formative period in Rome and remained in contact with the heads of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide after his return to France. Though he seems

to have intended to follow an Italian model, local sensibilities and pressures transformed the confraternities in ways that reflected the harsh sentiments of religious violence that had remained in France even after the wars of religion had come to a close. In addition to providing material support for converts and helping them find new professional and social ties to replace those they lost after abjuring heresy, the members of the confraternities gave a strong ideological edge to their activities, lobbying local and royal authorities to deny Protestants access to offices, justice, and economic opportunity and organizing public ceremonies and festivals that were designed to provoke and intimidate Protestants into conversion rather than persuade or entice them.[61]

These institutes, and the successful attempts to import them into other European countries, were not a mere sideshow to a church militant of blind intolerance that could only conceive of violent or coercive solutions to the problems of Lutheran and Calvinist heresy. Rather, their history serves as a reminder that there was a significant alternative approach to the Protestant world within the ranks of the Catholic clergy in Italy and allows us to glimpse a far more nuanced dialectic between different sections of the bureaucracy of the Catholic Church. While actual theological compromise with the Protestant world was only contemplated on the margins of the Catholic hierarchy (by Contarini in the sixteenth and Rojas y Spinola and Jansenius in the seventeenth centuries) there was plenty of disagreement about how to best procure the conversion of Protestants to Catholicism and the ways that conversion interacted with an array of other strategic and political issues. Behind words such as 'castigation' and 'forgiveness' lay a complex array of approaches, methods of dialogue and coercion, and tactics, all of which were carefully regulated by religious and political authorities who were well aware of the larger framework in which they were operating. In the seventeenth century, the hospices were a response both to the church's waning political influence in Europe and to the risks posed to the papacy, and to Italy in general, by a total closure to the intellectual, cultural, and economic developments in Northern Europe.

Notes

1 The most complete analysis of the diplomatic negotiations leading up to the absolution remains L. von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, trans. R. Kerr (London: Kegan Paul, 1933), vol. 23, pp. 59–158.

2 Selections from the *Apologeticus*, codex Vall. Q 48, are in H. Laemmer (ed.), *Analecta Romana* (Schaffhausen, 1861), pp. 142–3; a complete edition of the text is in M. Borrelli, 'Ricerche sul Baronio II', *Studi Secenteschi*, 8 (1967), pp. 131–52; the events are recounted in C. K. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius: Counter-Reformation Historian* (Notre Dame University Press, 1975), pp. 67–77.

3 On the ceremony, see G. P. Mucanzio, *Relatione della reconciliatione, assolutione, et benedittione del serenissimo Henrico Quarto Christianissimo Re di Francia & Navarra* (Viterbo, 1595); on the reliquary, see *Venerabilis Caesaris Baronii SRE Cardinalis Bibliotecarii Epistolae et Opuscula*, ed. R. Alberici (Rome, 1759), vol. 2, p. 64.

4 The phrase comes from a letter dated January 5, 1598 from Teio di San Giorgio to Ancina's fellow Oratorian cardinal Francesco Maria Tarugi: 'Che sentir nuove che il P. Giovenale sia un folgore per tutta Roma, e che faccia timore, e temere et imparare con un crocifisso vivamente se predichi per crocifisso, e pero tutto questo non occoreva ricordarli, sapendo ben lei, per haverlo esperimentato et piena di zelo', ACOR A.I.11, f. 347.

5 See the entry on Ancina by G. Damilano in *DBI*, vol. 3, pp. 40–3; G. Marciano, *Memorie Historiche della Congregatione dell'Oratorio* (Naples, 1693), p. 400; A. Cistellini, *San Filippo Neri. L'Oratorio e Congregazione Oratoriana* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 1451–7, and I. Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero. Forestieri e Inquisizione a Roma in età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2011), pp. 74–5, 81.

6 On the attempts to convert Beza, see von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 23, pp. 418–19; the analogy between Beza and the pope was made by the Jesuit Luca Pinelli, who met and debated with him in 1580, M. Scaduto, 'La Ginevra di Teodoro Beza nei ricordi di un gesuita lucano, Luca Pinelli (1542–1607)', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 20 (1951), pp. 117–42, 137.

7 An undated letter from fra Cherubino da Moriana to Ancina regarding papal support for the mission to Geneva is in ACOR A.I.16, f. 154. A number of letters between François de Sales and Clement VIII, Ancina, and Baronio can be found in volumes 11–21 of *Les Oeuvres de St. François de Sales* (Annecy: J. Niérat, 1892–1932).

8 ACOR, A.I.12, ff. 781–786: Letter from Orazio Maglione to Giovenale Ancina, dated September 8, 1602: 'negotio indirizzato ad honor del signor Iddio et utilità del prossimo nella conversione de' poveri di Ginevra convertiti, et d'altre nattioni venuti a Roma, qual mediante la divina misericordia hanno detestato li errori loro enormissimi, et false opinion et si sono ridotti nel sicuro gremio di santa chiesa, dalla quale sono stati abbracciati con particolare gratia e favore dalla solita paterna et indicibile pietà della santità di Nostro Signore'.

9 The records of the first meetings of the congregation are in ACOR, A.I.12, ff. 749–778.

10 A letter from Favergue, 'un nepote benedetto del maledetto Calvino' in favour of Ancina's beatification is in ACOR, A.I.12, f. 705.

11 On de Sponde, Schoppe, and Reboul, see Räss, *Die Convertiten*, vol. 3, pp. 285–296, 328–373, 395–443; Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, pp. 107, 108, 113, 132–146; on de Sponde, Pierre Frizon, 'Vita Henrici Spondani', in *Annalium Eminentissimi Cardinalis Caes. Baronii Continuatio ab Anno MCXCVII ab Anno MCXCVII quo is desiit, ad finem MDCXLVI, per Henricum Spondanum* (Paris, 1659), pp. xvii–xxxv; Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius*, pp. 84–6.

12 J. Baronius, *Iusti Baronii Veteracastrensis Epistolarum Sacrarum* (Mainz, 1605), p. 47.

13 Baronius, *Epistolarum Sacrarum*, p. 64.

14 Ibid., p. 209.

15 Ibid., pp. 227–36; J. Baronius, *Iusti Calvini Veteracastrensis Pro sacrosancta Catholica Romana Ecclesia, proque sua ad eam transmigratione apologia* (Mainz, 1601).

16 ACOR, A.I.16, f. 229: Letter from Raffaele Trigona to Giovenale Ancina, dated Rome, June 27, 1603.

17 On the inspection, G. Romeo, 'Denunciare i delitti contro la fede nell'Italia della Controriforma: la storia di un fallimento', in M. Charageat and M. Soula (eds), *Dénoncer le crime du Moyen Âge au*

XIXe siècle (Bordeaux: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de l'Acquitaine, 2014), pp. 189–201; the question of whether Ancina's congregation ever entirely ceased operating is still subject to debate. See A. Raunio, *Conversioni al cattolicesimo. La presenza degli scandinavi nell'Ospizio dei Convertendi* (Turku: University of Turku, 2009), pp. 50–2 and Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, p. 203.

18 'Nelle lettere che spessissimo mi scriveva, mi raccomandava con pietosissimo affetto questo offizio di ospitalità, e mi diceva che avrebbe voluto che da tutti fossero ricevuti questi poverelli convertiti *con sovrabbondante carità*, accio tornati ai loro paesi avessero potuto raccontare la carità Cristiana, e fosse stimolo agli eretici di convertirsi, e farsi cattolici, di che detto padre teneva grandissimo zelo'. (my italics) *Salutiarum Beatificationis et Canonizationis ven. servi dei Joannis Juvenalis Ancinae, Novissima Positio super Virtutibus* (Rome, 1856), p. 12; the canonization trial began in 1619.

19 Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, p. 208.

20 Borromeo's correspondence with bishops regarding the Sainte Maison is in BAM, G. 199, ff. 444, 451, 452, 469 and BAM, G. 193, f. 5, 164; an undated letter from Borromeo to Ancina about a certain dottor Rossetti who had taken refuge in Rome from the temptations of heresy is in ACOR, A.I.36, f. 31r-v; another letter at f. 32r refers to a man sent by Ancina to Borromeo in Milan for assistance without specifying whether or not he was a convert.

21 Federico Borromeo's relations with the Oratorians are outlined in the entry by P. Prodi in *DBI*, vol. 13, pp. 33–42 and in the more recent biography by P. Paghilughi, *Il Cardinal Federico Borromeo* (Milan: Marietti, 2010).

22 ASDM, Catecum. 12, section 14 'Origine e progresso del collegio dei neofiti'; archbishop Benedetto Erba Odescalchi closed the house at Porta Comasina in 1728, though the institute continued to exist as a charitable foundation for the instruction and financial support of converts who were sent to live in private houses and inns while they were being prepared for baptism or abjuration.

23 On San Sempliciano's place in the civic history of Milan, P. Moriggia, *Historia dell'antichità di Milano divisa in quattro libri* (Venice, 1592), pp. 301, 329–31; on Borromeo's antiquarianism, B. Agosti, *Collezionismo e archeologia Cristiana nel Seicento. Federico Borromeo e il Medioevo artistico tra Roma e Milano* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1996), pp. 119–36.

24 ASDM, Catecum. 12, section 2, 'Regole che s'osservano al presente nel Collegio di Alumni fundato dall'Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo signor Cardinale Federico Borromeo Arcivescovo di Milano'; document 4 in appendix.

25 BAM, G. 230, f. 80

26 BAM, G. 199, f. 302: San Giorgio to Borromeo, 1608; see also G. 193, f. 116, a recommendation to Borromeo by the archpriest of Mazzo in the Valtellina for a place in the college on behalf of a young man who had abandoned his family after his mother married a Lutheran preacher, 1604.

27 ASDM, Catec. 12, ff.nn., 1749 report by Angelo Maria Durini, document 5 in the appendix to this volume.

28 The first deputies were the canons Castano and Pionni, the theologian of the church of San Tommaso in Terramara, Federico Rozzone, il Cavaliere Rignano, and Marcantonio Lomazzi, all chosen by Borromeo (ASDM, Catecum. 12, 'origine e progressi'); list of the procurators in Catecum. 13, 'Archivio del ven. Collegio de Neofiti e Cattecumini di Milano', f. 1.

29 ASDM, Catecum. 12, ff.nn., ASDM, Catecum. 14, ff.nn.

30 These numbers are compiled from the scattered receipts in ASDM, Catecum. 12, ff.nn.; they do not appear to have been gathered systematically and probably represent only a portion of the total from this period. I was unable to identify a register from this period in the inventory of the archive.

31 ASDM, Catecum. 12, ff.nn. Jews and Muslims were forbidden from living in Milan following the expulsion of the Jews by the Spanish governor in 1597, though they occasionally arrived from surrounding areas and in particular from the port of Genoa. And despite the fact that the *ospizio* was not initially intended for them, Borromeo seems to have been interested in their conversion as well. In 1619, he received a letter from his godson Giovan Battista Borromeo, a converted Turk who he placed under his protection: BAM, G 229, f. 83.

32 The 1740 account of Anna Formis/Rosa Duprè, included expenses for bloodletting, doctor's visits, and medicine, in addition to food and lodging. ASDMi, Catecum. 12, cc.nn.

33 ASDMi, Catecum. 12, ff.nn., document 5 in the appendix; on Durini, see the entry by N. Raponi in *DBI*, vol. 42, pp. 195–200.

34 ASDMi, Catecum. 12, ff.nn: 'Danari somministrati ripartitamente da Mons. Corbelli per le spese fatte

durante l'instruzione nella santa fede Cattolica di … Tedesco, che si diceva Eretico, presentandosi per esser instrutto, et abiurare, il quale fu licenziato prima di far l'abiura per essersi dubitato fondatamente della verità di quanto diceva'.

35ASDM, Catecum. 12, section 16, ff.nn.

36ASDM, Catecum. 12, section 16, ff.nn.

37In 1698, for example, the institute purchased a set of pliers and tongs for the cobbler Antonio Fabre after his conversion, ASDM, Catecum. 12, section 12, ff.nn.

38ASDM, Catecum. 11, ff.nn.

39The development of the institutes for Protestants also came after the Holy Office had begun to implement less severe penalties for those who did not willingly convert; only one case of capital punishment for a member of the reformed churches appears to have occurred in Milan during the long episcopacy of Federico Borromeo. M. Bendiscioli, 'Politica, Amministrazione, e Religione nell'età dei Borromei', in *Storia di Milano* (Rome: Treccani, 1957), vol. 10, p. 298, lists the 1621 execution of Paola Poletta vicentina, 'cristiana rinnegata'.

40The correspondence of Francesco Maria Bianchi is in ACDF, St. St. M 4-a, fols. 7–69; the ospizio in Turin, though originally intended for Protestants, also began to accept Jews, particularly in the eighteenth century, after a ghetto was created in the city. On the history of the institute in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Allegra, *Identità in bilico*, pp. 56–74. In 1740, at the behest of Carlo Emanuele III of Savoy, another casa was founded in Pinerolo, closer to the Waldensian settlements in the foothills of the Alps: C. Povero, 'I convertiti dell'Ospizio dei catecumeni in Pinerolo. Primi risultati di una ricerca in corso', *Bolletino della società di studi valdesi*, 201 (2007), pp. 33–73.

41ASPF, SOCG 354, f. 208

42S. Pagano, 'L'Ospizio dei Convertendi di Roma fra carisma missionario e regolamentazione ecclesiastica (1671–1700)', *Ricerche per la storia religiosa di Roma*, 10 (1998), pp. 313–90, 318; the institute's records have been explored exhaustively by R. Matheus, *Konversionen in Rom in der Frühen Neuzeit. Das Ospizio dei Convertendi 1673–1750* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) and, regarding converts from the Scandinavian countries, Raunio, *Conversioni al Cattolicesimo*, passim.

43Pagano, 'L'Ospizio dei Convertendi', pp. 336–8, 350–6.

44ASF, Ospizio del Melani 59, ff.nn., letter from Filippo Baldigiani to Domenico Melani, dated June 19, 1683. On Melani's musical career in Dresden, see M. E. Frandsen, *Crossing Confessional Boundaries: The Patronage of Italian Music in Seventeenth Century Dresden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17–35, 46–7, 58; Urbano Cerri's *relazione* to Pope Innocent XI briefly mentions an Italian musician living at the court of Elector in Dresden, almost certainly Melani, who had informed Roman authorities about the Elector's sympathies for Catholicism and his desire to make peace with the Papacy: *État present de l'Eglise Romaine dans toutes les parties du Monde, ecrit pour l'usage du Pape Innocent XI* (Amsterdam, 1716), pp. 37–40.

45ASF, Ospizio del Melani 2, part N, ff.nn.

46ASF, Ospizio del Melani 2, part P, ff.nn.

47ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1117, f. 221: Serafino Bertolini, general of the Dominican order, to Cosimo III de' Medici, letter dated May 7, 1689; Bertolini informs the duke that he has made arrangements to open the 'ospizio della nostra religione per ricevere gl'ospiti oltramontani' in Livorno that the Medici had requested and suggests a candidate for prior of the institute. It is not clear from later correspondence whether it was ever actually opened, though there was a German confessor in Livorno (see note 49).

48ASF, Melani 58, ff.nn. The booklet is entitled 'Testimonia sacrae scripturae pro struendo summo pontificatu romano'.

49On Livorno, see S. Villani, 'Protestanti a Livorno nella prima età moderna', in M. Mateus and U. Israel (eds), *Protestanten zwischen Venedig und Rom in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), pp. 129–42; there are numerous references to the limitations on the activity of the Holy Office in Civitavecchia in ACDF, St. St. M 4-b; C. F. Black, 'The Trials and Tribulations of a Local Roman Inquisitor. Giacomo Tinti in Modena, 1626–1647', *Giornale di Storia*, 9 (2012), 1–41 (accessed at http://www.giornaledistoria.net/ on March 18, 2015), 5–7, describes how the financial relationships between German merchants in Casale Monferrato, the Gonzaga, and local Italian merchants compromised the Inquisition's ability to expel the Germans from the city.

50Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, p. 147.

51Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, pp. 152–5.

52ASPF, SOCG 20, ff. 218–219, 222, two letters from fra' Zaccaria da Saluzzo to Francesco Ingoli, both dated September 20, 1636.

53Ibid.

54references to the 'confessore tedesco' are in ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1116, f. 57; Mediceo del Principato 1117, f. 464–5. Mediceo del Principato 2209, ff.nn.

55J. Nemec (ed.), *Documenti d'archivio per la storia delle conversioni religiose a Firenze nei secoli XVII–XVIII* (Florence: Uniedit, 1977), pp. 29–33.

56M. Völkel, 'Individuelle Konversion und die "Famiglia". Lukas Holstenius (1596–1661) und die Deutschen Konvertiten im Umkreis der Kurie', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 67 (1987), pp. 221–80; a detailed account of his meeting with Christina of Sweden and her conversion, including the papal document of absolution, is in G. Gualdo Priorato, *Historia della Sacra Real Maestà di Christina Alessandra Regina di Svezia* (Rome, 1656), pp. 81–120.

57Daniel Eremita's conversion is discussed in Räss, *Die Convertiten*, vol. 4, pp. 1–6; on Dudley, see S. Adams, 'Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, January 2008 at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8161 (accessed 16 April 2015).

58C. von Rantzau, *Christophori Ranzovii equitis holsati epistola ad georgium calixtum professorem helmstedensem qua sui ad ecclesiam catholicam accessus rationes exponit* (Rome, 1662), pp. 1–5, 9.

59ASPF, Stamperia 1, f. 156: a message from Bernardino Rocci instructing the secretary of Propaganda Fide to print and bind fifty copies of Rantzau's letter and distribute them to the 'signori Oltramontani' arriving in Rome.

60W. Reinhard (ed.), *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland. Die Kolner Nuntiatur. Nuntius Antonio Albergati (1610 Mai-1614 Mai)* (Munich: Verlag Ferdinand Schoningh, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 532–33, 742, 780, 821–22; on Albergati's involvement in the collegio dei neofiti, see BAM, G.258, f. 421; ASDM, Catecum. 12, section B. ff.nn.

61C. Martin, *Les Compagnies de la Propagation de la Foi (1632–1685). Paris, Grenoble, Aix, Lyon, Montpellier* (Geneva: Droz, 2000).

3 The Jewish Sons of the Holy Roman Church

In the summer of 1592, in the midst of a bitter famine, the newly elected Clement VIII embarked on an austere campaign of reform and moralization that served, among other things, to affirm his authority as the bishop and ruler of the city of Rome. He began a pastoral visit, an inspection of all of the churches and religious institutions in the capital and its surrounding territory, ordering repairs to derelict buildings, reprimanding priests whose conduct did not meet the standards set by the Council of Trent, and suspending those who were found immoral, gravely negligent, or incompetent. As they moved through the city, the pope and his collaborators gave special attention to two groups that were habitual targets of the Counter-Reformation church: prostitutes, who were expelled from the city *en masse*, and Jews, who were subjected to some of the most stringent regulations since the foundation of the ghetto in 1555. Old rules that had fallen into disuse were newly applied, such as edicts prohibiting Jews from engaging in business with converts and interacting socially or gambling with Christians. Perhaps the most humiliating blow of all was the partial dismantling of the *campo giudio*, the Jewish cemetery that had existed for centuries outside the city walls at Porta Portese. The inscriptions over each grave, denoting the name and dates of the individual buried underneath, were removed on the instructions of the apostolic vicar of the city of Rome, Cardinal Rusticucci, despite the offer of the Jewish community to pay 10,000 *scudi* to prevent the order from being carried out. In the end, wrote the author of an *avviso* describing the event, 'these very fine tombstones, which they use to write their epitaphs in Hebrew, were carried off to the church of Gesù, where they could be converted for new use'.[1]

During this very period, Clement introduced the Dominican friar Alessandro Franceschi into his inner circle, naming him apostolic preacher and papal theologian at a stipend of 15 scudi a month. Not least, Franceschi became vicar general of the Dominican order, an office which guaranteed him a seat at the most powerful of the fifteen congregations charged with governing the church, the Congregation of the Holy Office. Until his death in 1601, Franceschi would provide the pope with learned opinions on a range of theological and political matters and participated in the delicate diplomatic negotiations with representatives of Henry IV of France over the king's return to Catholicism. It

was no secret that Franceschi was a convert from Judaism, a product of the same Roman community that was suffering under the weight of the pope's regulations. He had made a long and successful career within the Dominican order out of his ability to read Hebrew and understand the finer points of Jewish exegesis of the Bible; he had become renowned throughout Italy for his preaching, both to Jews and Christians. To the foreign diplomats who crowded the courtyards of the Roman palaces, to the authors and readers of the *avvisi*, he was the *Ebreino*, or *Zudieto*, the Little Jew, a figure of curiosity and respect whose small stature contrasted with his erudition and authority.[2]

The fact that Franceschi was raised to such an exalted position in the very same days that the papacy was once again beginning to clamp down on the Jewish community might appear contradictory to contemporary eyes accustomed to viewing religious intolerance and racism as inevitably linked, twin forms of illiberal sentiment that separate society into a persecuting majority and a minority of victims. Yet in the mindset of the leadership of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, where religious faith was the only principle of unity, a supreme allegiance to which all else was subordinate, it was entirely appropriate to recognize the merits of one who had abandoned a despised religious minority while simultaneously persecuting his former community. For Clement and the other members of the curia, there was a perfect symmetry between the two decisions, and they were intended to convey a powerful symbolic message—intimating to Jews (but also Christians) that salvation was possible for those who recognized their errors, repented, and converted, while those who 'obstinately' (an adverb used frequently by Catholic authors when speaking of Jews) resisted would be cast into disgrace and ruin. It was one of many instances in which popes, more concerned with conveying a coherent message than producing a particular result, directed their policies according to the dictates of Christian moral drama.

There was no more willing participant in this drama than Franceschi himself, who by the time he joined the papal entourage had dedicated his entire life to personifying the ideal convert, a man born in Jewish 'error' who strived to become, in the words of *Acts*, the *vas electionis* —God's instrument for the conversion of his people—and had been rewarded with a series of important roles in one of the most important of the religious orders. He was by no means the first convert, nor even the first Dominican, to play this role. There had been many others. Beginning in the Middle Ages, polemicists such as Pablo Christiani, Pablo de Santa Maria, and his son Alonso de Cartagena, were all aggressive defenders of the Christian message on the heated religious battlefields of late medieval Castile.[3] Franceschi himself, and many of those who witnessed his life and remembered him after his death, attempted to portray him in the same way that the church remembered those medieval

converts, as Jews who had renounced ancestral bonds and religious errors in order to serve the truth of the gospel and the church. All had proved exceptionally skilful at undermining the arguments of the authorities of the Jews and exposing the falsehoods and inconsistencies of their sacred books. All were in one way or another explicitly or implicitly compared to the first and greatest of all converts from Judaism, Paul.

However, unlike most of his medieval predecessors, and many of his contemporaries, Franceschi left behind an extensive written record of his activities—letters, theological *quaestiones*, and reports—which together with the many references to him in the writings of contemporaries allow a much more detailed understanding of his life and the way it was interpreted, not only by the convert himself but also by the other members of the curia and the ecclesiastical élite who favoured his career. It is a record that reveals a personage who fit entirely into this tradition, an inquisitor and polemicist who waged a tireless battle to convert Jews and heretics, a censor of theological works and Hebrew literature, and a pious convert, zealous preacher, and theologian. Yet it also contains clues to a more complex story lurking underneath the surface: of an inquisitor who was especially cruel to other Jewish converts and of a conformist whose tireless defence of the church's orthodoxy and personification of its universalism gave way towards the end of his life to a mounting sense of isolation and alienation from a church whose acceptance of converts was only, and could only ever be, partial. For Franceschi, as for many other converts who were dependent on the patronage of sovereigns and high prelates, it was difficult to separate the personal from the political and the theological, and the narrative of his life, his successes and failures coincided with important debates over conversion within the curia.

* * *

Alessandro Franceschi's conversion took place shortly after his birth in 1543, at a time when the Jews of Rome still lived in what was known as the '*contrada degli ebrei*' and not yet the ghetto, in relative liberty and with very few restrictions on their interactions with the Christian majority.[4] He was born into a divided family: His father, Graziadio da Foligno, had been baptized by Ignatius of Loyola, while his mother, Giusta di Servadio, estranged from her husband and the church, refused to follow suit and remained in Umbria, the region where the couple originated. The newborn Franceschi was brought to Rome and baptized after Paul III sent an armed band into the Papal States to find his pregnant mother; Franceschi's father, who became *scriptor hebraicus* in the Vatican library, never reunited with his wife.[5] It is undoubtedly significant that these events occurred during the very period when Paul III, at

the suggestion of Loyola, had founded the first catechumen house. In a letter written in the 1570s from Milan, where he was attempting to convince Carlo Borromeo to provide funds for the Casa dei Catecumeni, Franceschi attributed to his father much of the credit for having founded and perfected the institution:

> I told him … that I had already worked on behalf of [the Casa] in Naples, and that beyond the many reasons which oblige me to aid it, there is in particular the fact that I am a member of [the Hebrew] nation, and that this institution was erected and for the most part developed by my father, may he rest in peace.[6]

With his father largely occupied with his duties in the papal library and his messianic attempt to convert his relatives, former friends, and neighbours, the adolescent Alessandro Franceschi was raised and educated by the Jesuits, first in Rome and later in Palermo, where he studied at the Jesuit college while in the service of a local nobleman. For a time, he even enjoyed a personal rapport with Ignatius, a figure who demonstrated little of the prejudice against Jewish converts that had become a constant feature of Iberian society and politics over the previous century and a half, instead claiming, according to Ribadeneira, that he considered it a sign of 'special grace' to be born a Jew and therefore related to Christ by blood.[7] An anecdote involving the young Franceschi, in which Ignatius punished him after he swore an oath, even became a part of the saint's official hagiographic legend.[8] And there is some evidence of Ignatius' intellectual influence on Franceschi as well, despite the fact that he eventually parted ways with his Jesuit preceptors. In one of his earliest writings, an apologetic *Dialogue between a Jew and a Christian*, Franceschi appears to borrow the tone and terminology of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, instructing the Jewish participant in the dialogue to pray that God might 'illuminate the eyes of his mind'.[9]

Nevertheless, despite the intensity of his early relationship with St Ignatius and the Jesuits, Franceschi did not join the order, a choice that remains difficult to explain and which would have a significant impact on his later career. Instead, in 1557, he became a Dominican novice, entered the convent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and was ordained in 1562 at the age of twenty-eight, later receiving a doctorate in theology. Under the Dominican pope Pius V, he entered the circle of the cardinal-nephew Michele Bonelli, where he was to remain for the better part of his career. Franceschi spent the period between 1566 and 1592 as a Dominican theologian and preacher whose learning and eloquence made him famous even beyond the Alps.[10] For many observers in Rome, Franceschi was an exemplary prelate, an individual who personified the successes of the church's attempts to convert the Jewish community of the city and the opportunities available to those who possessed the courage to leave the community and join the Catholic majority.

* * *

How far could a talented and educated convert rise in the dangerously competitive world of the Roman curia? Under the protection of Clement VIII, the sky was apparently the limit: In 1592, as vicar *pro tempore* of the Dominican order, Franceschi joined the Congregation of the Holy Office, placing him in arguably the most important centre of power within the curia, the committee of cardinals and theologians who adjudicated theological and dogmatic disputes arriving from across the globe and heard in appeal the most difficult cases that arrived from the local tribunals of the Inquisition. He proved to be a rigorous, even hard-hearted bureaucrat. On June 28, he proposed a death sentence for Tommaso Merlini da Fucecchio, a relapsed heretic, a decision that was confirmed by the other members of the congregation and eventually approved by the pope. And in an especially significant meeting on July 23, he voted to have two converts from Judaism from Safed in Palestine, Ludovico and Giovan Battista Benvenuti, interrogated under torture, condemned for apostasy, and sentenced to the papal galleys.[11]

As a collaborator of the Holy Office, Franceschi also turned his attention towards literary censorship, and he proved no less inflexible in this field. In addition to following in his father's footsteps as a censor of Hebrew literature and the Talmud, he also combed through the works of the Latin humanists of the previous century, pointing out elements that he deemed heretical or contrary to accepted doctrine. From Lorenzo Valla to the sixteenth-century Christian humanist Beatus Rhenanus, the friar carefully identified, and disapprovingly noted, any criticism of scholastic theology or the Dominican order. He reserved special attention for the works of Juan Luis Vives, a humanist of Spanish converso origin who fled Valencia for the Low Countries after members of his family had been executed by the Inquisition. This 'suspicious person' was in Franceschi's view guilty of an excessive loyalty to the positions of his friend and mentor Erasmus, as well as of a taste for Platonic elements in theology. Last but not least, Vives had made the poor choice of dedicating the text in question, a commentary on the *City of God*, to Henry VIII of England.[12]

In all of these examples, Franceschi revealed himself to be an inflexible arbiter of Counter-Reformation values, reluctant to allow any room for even mild forms of compromise or experimentation with the vast realms of theology, philosophy, and early modern culture which had been designated heretical or contrary to religion by the rigid canons of Dominican theology. Though he was an exceptionally attentive reader and eloquent writer, there was little that was original or probing in Franceschi's criticisms of the texts he read or in his understandings of the men and women whose religious crimes

he judged. And despite the formidable reputation he earned as a preacher, there is little evidence in any of his surviving writings of any interest in deviating from the strict guidelines of Thomistic theology or the most narrow traditions in canon law when confronting the many problems that came before him. From an intellectual point of view, there is no doubt of his allegiance to the most intransigent wing of the Counter-Reformation church.

This was confirmed during the controversy over the absolution of Henry IV of France in which Franceschi found himself, along with most of the Dominicans in Rome and the Congregation of the Holy Office, in opposition to Baronio and the French faction, arguing for a flat refusal of the heretic king's advances. In 1592, Clement VIII entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to meet Cardinal Gondi in Florence in order to prevent the cardinal, an emissary of the king who was attempting to negotiate on his behalf, from reaching Rome too early. Appropriately, Franceschi formulated the demands of the papacy in the most extreme form possible, in a way which faithfully expressed his own opinions on the matter, but which also created a pretext to forestall the cardinal's arrival in Rome and buy the pope the necessary time to resolve the issue.[13]

The success of Franceschi's mission further solidified his position in the papal curia, despite the pope's eventual decision to absolve the king, and sometime after he returned, the pope began to consider the possibility of nominating him to high ecclesiastical office, to an episcopal see, or benefice that would grant him greater income and a more important role in the curia. However, as so often occurred within the overheated atmosphere of European courts, it was precisely the moment of Franceschi's ascent to the highest level of dignity and honour that exposed the tensions that had remained hidden during his ascent. According to a history of the Dominican order published shortly after Franceschi's death, Clement had intended to name him to the College of Cardinals, a move that would have been without precedent in the history of the Roman church, but ultimately decided not to because of 'the impediment of Judaism'.[14] The implications behind this opaque phrase became clear in 1594, when the pope nominated Franceschi bishop of Forlì, a wealthy agricultural centre in the Papal States that was something less than cardinalate, but nevertheless an important benefice and an object of contention like any other major office.

The nomination of a converted Jew to an episcopal see posed a vexing series of legal problems that could only be resolved by a series of contradictory responses from the text of scripture, the history of the church, and the decisions of canonists. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy explicitly stated that a bishop 'must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil' (1 Timothy 3:6), and this prohibition

had been incorporated into medieval commentaries on canon law.[15] Furthermore, the painful circumstances of Franceschi's conversion and his mother's refusal to follow her husband to the baptismal font meant that his parents' marriage had been dissolved, casting the shadow of illegitimacy on his birth, another potential impediment.[16] Both as a convert and as an illegitimate child, Franceschi appeared, according to long-standing and widely accredited traditions, unfit for the office of bishop, and while the names of those who had opposed his nomination are unknown to us, he and his supporters were forced to mount a substantial defence of his name. Both claims were disputed in two briefs written either by Franceschi or at his instruction, and which were among his papers at the time of his death. The first concerned the issue of his Jewish heritage. Three pages of faultless scholastic reasoning arrived at the conclusion that 'a Jew who has become a Christian is capable (*capax*) of obtaining an ecclesiastical benefice, and of entering into possession of a cathedral church'. 'In considering a promotion', the brief argued, 'one should not consider the subject's quality at their origin, but rather their quality at the time of the promotion'. In short, the status of a convert as a new man was to be taken literally, cancelling the past and opening his way towards a range of possibilities that was, in theory, without limit. The question of illegitimacy was also resolved by arguing that Franceschi's birth was not in fact illegitimate, because his parents had been married at the time of his birth.[17]

As a result, Franceschi was allowed to become bishop of Forlì, where his identity as a convert seems to have provoked curiosity and interest rather than hostility. One local observer, a lawyer, remarked in his diary on the day of the bishop's arrival that:

> the father of this prelate was a Jew, and he was born a Jew and was circumcised, but he has lived well for so long and is so learned that the pope wanted to make him our bishop, even though, as Saint Paul says, 'not a convert, lest he be puffed up.' May it please god that we have a good shepherd of souls.[18]

Franceschi's five-year-long term as bishop of Forlì was characterized by an attempt to impose a strict interpretation of the decrees of the Council of Trent on the diocese, including the observation of full claustration for convents. He also became involved in a series of financial battles with the cathedral chapter and the city government, the kind of conflict which regularly flared up whenever a bishop attempted to impose reform on local institutions which were proud of their autonomy and resistant to change. After one particularly intense fight with the chapter, and perhaps already in poor health, Franceschi gave up the see and its benefices and returned to Rome in 1599.[19]

Franceschi's status as a convert made him unique in the Italian episcopacy

following the Council of Trent, and though he served for a relatively short period, his example became an important precedent that was used in the future to justify the creation of convert bishops. Antonio Ricciullo, a Dominican theologian and inquisitor of the following generation, evoked Franceschi's name in a legal tract which became one of the most important sources of Catholic legal doctrine regarding minorities and converts. While he recognized the importance of Paul's letter to Timothy, he nevertheless considered the fact that most of the early church was composed of converted Jews to be of greater importance and pointed out that Ambrose had been made bishop of Milan when still a neophyte. And in closing his argument, entirely in favour of allowing converts to acquire civil offices and ecclesiastical benefices, he cited Franceschi as an example, 'a man of such great charity, and so great a preacher, that it was enough to see him to understand that he was worthy of being a bishop'.[20]

In the background of this local controversy lay the greater question of *limpieza de sangre*, and the ambiguous attitude of the Roman curia towards this vexing issue of theology and missionary practice. Paul III had offered support to critics of *limpieza* and favoured conversions (see chapter 1), but he had also approved the notorious 1547 statute of blood purity issued by the Toledo cathedral chapter, opening the way to the extension of what had been a highly controversial doctrine to ecclesiastical institutions. In 1572, supporters of the Spanish crown had succeeded in having a friar, Alonso Lobo, who had preached against the blood purity statutes in the Spanish national church of San Giacomo, arrested and tried by the Inquisition in Rome. And while Clement VIII had emerged as an opponent of blood purity, there still remained numerous groups and individuals (not all of them Iberians) in the galaxy of officials, religious orders, and diplomats across the city who sought to defend the doctrine and worked to have it applied universally.[21] They could only have seen the elevation of Franceschi to the cardinalate or the episcopacy as a provocation in the extreme and may well have been behind the opposition to his nomination.

* * *

The stakes of this battle became clearer in 1593, when what had been until then a covert and silent controversy broke out into the open. The occasion was the fifth general congregation of the Society of Jesus, the order that had more than any other favoured New Christians among its ranks and had long held the distinction of being among the few religious orders that were not bound by blood purity statutes. Ignatius had famously refused to draw distinctions between the converso members of his order and those of Old Christian lineage,

even arguing that Jewish blood rendered its bearers closer to Christ. He had given conversos leading roles in the society (Polanco, his secretary; Laìnez, his successor as general of the order; and Ribadeneira, his biographer, all had degrees of converso lineage), and defended their right to enter the order. Yet after the founder's death, several groups within the rapidly expanding order, particularly from its Italian and Portuguese components, became less inhibited about voicing their intolerance towards the presence of conversos within the order and began to search for ways to erode their influence. During the congregation of 1593, the conflict came to a head, and the anti-converso faction succeeded in ratifying a regulation that prevented converts from Judaism and Islam and their children from entering the order.[22]

The decision of the congregation of 1593 was to remain a guiding principle of the Jesuit order for centuries to come, and the ban on New Christians impacted the activities of the Society across the world. Nevertheless, it is worth considering the personal impact that it must have had on Franceschi as well. Though he was not a member of the order, and therefore not directly affected by the decision, it nevertheless hit painfully close to home: The overturning of the teaching of the founder of the order, who Franceschi had known as a child and who had overseen his education, touched on the same delicate questions that had affected his own career. Furthermore, it brought the papacy, and the church as a whole, towards an explicit, albeit partial, abandonment of its universalist message. There is no evidence that he ever spoke publicly about the question of blood purity, but there are clues suggesting that the decision, and the prejudice that drove it, disturbed him. Franceschi's papers at his death included a copy in his own handwriting of Lobo's opinion that the statutes of blood purity represented an attempt to break the unity of the church and, as such, a heresy.[23]

At the same time, the conclusion of the fifth general congregation seems to have alienated Franceschi from the Society of Jesus, and his papers provide evidence of this as well. In a bound volume of manuscripts entitled 'Abuses and Reform of the Jesuit Order', Franceschi collected briefs arguing that the Jesuits had become a corrupted vestige of their former selves, who experimented with the most extreme and speculative doctrines of philosophy and had abandoned the rigor of scholastic theology. 'Though they profess to aid the church and the soul with their doctrines, it seems on the contrary that they wish to [aid] paganism', one concluded.[24] Its author recommended a number of remedies, including that Aquinas be restored to his rightful place as the chief authority in theology and, more drastically, that the Society be placed under the constant scrutiny of the Holy Office. The prefects of the Jesuit colleges should be required to investigate every month whether 'new or extraordinary' opinions were being taught there and report their findings to

the Holy Office. And the privileges extended in the past to the Society for reading prohibited books and reconciling heretics through confession should be revoked. Finally, any member of the order who was expelled for suspicion of heresy should be required to depose before the Holy Office.[25] In short, the recommendations made clear that he considered the Society a damaged body in need of reform and viewed the proper path as a reining in of the order's privileges and a close supervision by the Inquisition and, by extension, the Dominican order itself.

There were many reasons why a Dominican might have been critical of the Jesuits in the 1590s, most of which had little to do with the question of *limpieza* . Since 1588, the two orders had been engaged in a ferocious theological struggle which involved almost all of the major university faculties of the Catholic world and eventually required the intervention of the pope. As Paolo Broggio has recently pointed out, the so-called *de auxiliis* controversy was often used as a pretext for other, less intellectually refined, battles between the two largest and most powerful religious orders for predominance in Rome and in the schools and universities, between the French and Spanish monarchies for pre-eminence within the church, and between personal and professional rivals.[26] It is no surprise that someone like Franceschi, whose mastery of theology and experience with the Holy Office made him among the leaders of the Dominican faction in Rome, was involved in these disputes, nor that he would have naturally become a partisan of his own order in such a bitter confrontation.

Yet, while there was without question theological content in the material that Franceschi collected in order to discredit the Jesuits, some of its contents suggest that he too might have viewed these issues as a pretext to attack the order over the question of purity of blood. One document alleged that the Society had swelled through the acceptance of too many low-born members of the populace within its ranks, which had diluted its original quality, a sort of reversal of the argument made in favour of banning New Christians. Even more significantly, another brief argued that the Society, which had once been a pure and productive member of the church, had been degraded over the years by the birth of factions that fought one another for control, and in particular identified a faction within the order as among the main culprits for its decline; its members included Benedetto Palmio, the Italian who together with a group of Portuguese allies led the assault on the conversos within the order.[27]

Franceschi does not seem to have ever taken the step of bringing these positions sketched in private into the open as direct proposals to one of the papal congregations or in publications that could be read and circulated. Nor is there any evidence that he pursued any particular action in favour of New

Christians. But together with the arguments that he developed in his own defence, they suggest a barely concealed anger at witnessing the church betray his highest expectations as well as the profound tragedy of his position as a convert. Despite the honours and authority that he had accumulated during his life, he found himself humiliated at the very moment he appeared poised to claim an unprecedented reward and was forced to defend himself against long-standing prejudices that threatened his position. No other convert experienced the kind of success and affirmation that he did, but for this very reason, his life illustrates better than many others the profound limitations placed on the aspirations of any convert in Rome, and especially those who chose ecclesiastical careers. While their lives became rich testimony for a church that depended heavily on symbols of redemption and divine providence, the very fact that they had abandoned one faith for another made them intrinsically suspect. Though his status as a convert provided him with protection and influence that would have been difficult to obtain otherwise, he was also forced to defend himself and other converts against the accusation that they were on the one hand too zealous and on the other too inconsistent or heretical to be entrusted with positions of real authority.

This ambivalence, which had frustrated Franceschi's greatest ambitions, was to endure well into the centuries that followed. Though popes and princes periodically intensified the pressure on Jewish communities to convert, the status of those who responded to this message was never clearly stated, and the fate of individuals often depended largely on their patrons. Though there were many other converts from Judaism who acquired favour at the papal court and in other places in Italy in the early modern period, none ever became as close to a reigning pontiff, and all experienced an even more cramped existence than Franceschi, their own identities ever-more subsumed in those of their patrons, and their opportunities and autonomy hemmed in by the advance of prejudice against converts into ever larger sections of the church and Italian society. The convert Paolo Sebastiano Medici, godson to Cosimo III de' Medici and the spokesman for the grand duke as he attempted to reverse many of the policies of autonomous government and religious tolerance conceded by his predecessors to the Jews in Tuscany, found in 1690 that not even the support of the illustrious house of Medici could help his application for entrance to the Barnabite order. After receiving his request, the general wrote directly to the duke, politely explaining that rules of the order prohibited him from approving it. The days when a convert from Judaism might aspire to an episcopal title or even a cardinalate had long since passed.[28]

* * *

Some thirty years after Franceschi's death, in 1628, another Jewish child was born into an extended family of Iberian origin that enjoyed a degree of prominence within the Florentine ghetto and the Medici court, the Blanis. It is unclear what kind of circumstances Graziadio di David Blanis was born into, nor is anything known about his family's social and economic status or what their role in the small but stratified Jewish community of the city might have been.[29] At the age of fourteen, he fled the ghetto and asked for refuge in one of the city's monasteries, where he recounted that while his father had treated him well, fear of his mother and her 'blasphemies' had pushed him to flee and become a Christian. It was not his first attempt; when he escaped from the ghetto a few months prior, a Christian friend of his mother had noticed him and reported the news to his family. This time, however, he was taken in by the friars, who convinced him to become a Christian and sent him to the Casa dei Catecumeni. Graziadio became Niccolò Orlandini on September 14, 1642, taking the name of a Florentine senator and official of the Casa.[30]

There was nothing exceptional about the conversion, and the Blanis were only one in a long list of Jewish households broken up by the sudden and impulsive choice of one of their members to abandon the ghetto and join Christian society. And even though Niccolò Orlandini later abandoned the seminary in Fiesole where he was studying and returned to the ghetto and his family, this turned out to be a momentary lapse that was not to be repeated. As a young man, Orlandini joined the Franciscan order, changing his name to Francesco Maria. By 1662, when he next appears in the historical record, he had come into his own as a zealous missionary to the Jews of Tuscany. In a letter he wrote to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide requesting a transfer from the remote convent where he was living to that of Santa Croce, in the centre of Florence, he provided a brief résumé of the services that he had performed for the church. It had been twenty years, he wrote, since

> he was brought by the aura of the holy spirit from Judaism to the sacrosanct Catholic faith, and has spent part of the time since building a perfect understanding of Christian truth. Since he desired to multiply the talents he received, he used the remaining years to procure the salvation of his relatives, many of whom he has already brought with divine favor under the standard of the Holy Mother Church, in whose merciful breast they live with religious exemplarity, mostly enclosed in convents.[31]

As a sort of appendix to the letter, he included a list of the members of his family who had converted and the circumstances in which they had done so. They included, in Florence:

> In 1645, Laura, his sister by blood, a girl of eighteen years taken against her relatives' wishes from the ghetto, which cost him a mortal wound in his side given to him by his brother by blood. The girl is today a veiled nun in the monastery of Santa Chiara and is called Suor Anna Maria Felice.
>
> In 1650, Laudadio Blanis, his cousin's son, aged seventeen, today he is a professed monk of the Benedictine order named Francesco Maria Capponi.In 1651, Laura, his niece, aged fifteen, today living in the nunnery of the Lambs of the holy virgin, known as the Montalve, named Suor Maria

Maddalena.

In 1656, Angelo, his sixteen-year-old nephew, converted and was baptized. Today he is a student of surgery at the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence and is named Antonio Maria.

Orlandini had also converted relatives in Livorno, Tuscany's main port on the Mediterranean coast, by this date a bustling hub of commerce with a wealthy and cosmopolitan community of Jewish merchants; he duly listed their names for his superiors as evidence of his talent as a missionary. He concluded the list by remarking that he had helped to catechize Jewish converts in Padua and Florence over the years, 'at continuous risk of his life'.[32]

In this request, made twenty years after his baptism, Orlandini did his best to persuade his correspondents in Rome that his conversion was total and that he had become an effective proselyte for the Catholic Church. He spared no detail that could testify to his absolute loyalty and his willingness to undergo hardship in order to serve it, including the conversions of his two sisters, one of whom he abducted from the family while still a child and another whom he converted on her deathbed. In both cases, Orlandini had faced violent attacks from members of his own family and the Jewish community. He cast himself in the role of the pious cleric dedicated to the redemption of his people, an activity to which he was particularly suited as a convert and former Jew, and his own claims were supported by a brief recommendation from the dean of the canons of Florence who described him as a 'cleric of praiseworthy customs and famous for his studies … who had been recuperated from Jewish perfidy'.[33] By all accounts, Orlandini had replicated, albeit on a more modest scale, the achievements of Franceschi and like his predecessor viewed the privileges that the Roman curia and local church could provide as necessary for the continuation of his work.

The outcome of Orlandini's request is not known, but the contents of his letter stand in sharp contrast to the image of him that emerged in another context several years later. In 1667, a nun from the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena in Città di Castello came before the court of the Inquisition and accused Orlandini, her confessor, of a range of offences. She claimed that he had attempted to seduce her in the confessional, a violation which fell under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, because inquisitors had long insisted that such grave and offensive behaviour could only be inspired by heretical ideas.[34] In this case, there was further evidence that appeared to confirm this view: Orlandini had repeatedly told the nun that the precepts of Judaism were true, that miracles were merely the result of chance circumstance rather than divine providence, and had mocked Jesus and Mary, all in order to persuade her to abandon her vows and elope with him. Outside of the confessional, he continued to appear as a pious and energetic missionary intent on evangelizing both Jews and the local peasantry. At the same time as he encouraged local

parishioners to fast in honour of Saint Anthony, he ridiculed Suor Maria Angelica's claims that the same saint had performed miracles on her behalf. Her testimony was supported by similar claims made by other witnesses who also told of his attempts to seduce them in the confessional and even by a Jew who had come to Orlandini in order to convert but had been turned away by the friar, who told him that there was 'no better faith which with to save oneself than the Jewish one'.[35]

Orlandini was forced to defend himself before the court, where he refused to confess to any of the crimes he was accused of, but the documentary record of his life cuts short at this point. Whether he was able to successfully defend himself and resume his career or suffered a humiliating condemnation for any of the crimes of which he was accused remains unknown. Nevertheless, these are secondary questions next to the essential riddle of the convert's personality. Did Orlandini lead a double life for his entire career as a convert, or was there a particular event that led him to change? Was his preaching of Judaism his 'real' religious identity, for which his clerical status and conversions of other Jews were simply a façade? Or was he instead a kind of libertine who saw religion and its rituals as a mere pretext (the only hypothesis that his judges do not appear to have taken into consideration)? Once the seeds of doubt had been planted in the minds of inquisitors, a number of possible ways to understand the attitudes that underlay the friar's actions unfolded before them.

It is tempting to read the stories of Franceschi and Orlandini the way that most preachers and storytellers in the period would have: as a moral parable of the 'good' and the 'bad' convert, of the saintly man of God and the diabolical two-faced apostate. And the fact that both men were members of the clergy, official representatives of the Catholic faith, makes the contrasts between them even more striking. Both were trained in the universities and seminaries of Counter-Reformation Italy, and they could have had few doubts regarding what constituted Catholic orthodoxy and where its boundaries lay, nor any opportunity for syncretism or open dialogue with other religious traditions. After traumatic childhoods, they had grown to maturity within institutions under the control of the Catholic clergy where they were taught to identify entirely with the church and view their own lives in terms of obedience and service to it. It was not uncommon for converts to refer to themselves as 'sons' of the church or of the religious order they belonged to, an epithet which emphasized not only the importance of their religious vows but also their complete separation from their original families and rebirth within the church.

Yet these stereotypes would disguise the uneasy coexistence between the former Jewish identities of both converts and the Christian missionaries that they later became. If the propagandists of the Catholic Church and the

Dominican order were anxious to hold up Franceschi as the ideal of the pious convert who had been rewarded by God and the church for the strength of his belief and the quality of his service, they were almost silent regarding the questions that had impeded his nomination as bishop. To the extent that a Jewish past was a negative attribute for a convert, it was one that was discussed with reluctance. Their embarrassment was shared by the convert himself: Franceschi, despite his links with the Jesuit order and with Loyola, chose to fight his battle against the anti-Jewish faction in the rival order covertly, through accusations and arguments that never appear to have seen the light of day and which did nothing to stop the final implementation of the blood purity statute. Franceschi appears in many ways a tragic figure who was rewarded with enormous benefits by an institution that never ceased viewing him with suspicion.

By the time Orlandini began his religious journey nearly half a century later, the aspirations for unity and redemption that had motivated Franceschi had given way to a much more cynical opportunism. Rather than subjecting himself to the ascetic discipline that his role required or attempting to pattern his life on the models of conversion offered by the church, he apparently took a different path, doing his best to personify the image of the pious convert in public while secretly violating its norms and abusing his authority as a cleric when out of view. And the same kind of crude opportunism can be seen in his letter to Propaganda Fide. The converts that he brought to Catholicism are proffered in the letter as collateral for a favour to be granted by the papacy, their intentions and desire to become Catholics secondary to the fact that Orlandini had been the one responsible for their baptism. His alleged seduction of the nun in Città di Castello seems to fall into the same pattern: His proselytizing of Judaism was simply a means to an end, a way for both of them to pursue a new life outside of their religious vows, as man and wife. In both cases, religious values functioned only to justify earthly needs and impulses.

Orlandini's behaviour may have been a reaction to the slow abandonment of the traditional tutelage of the rights of converts described in chapter 1, an attempt to survive in a climate that was indisputably more hostile than the one in which Franceschi had advanced in the previous century. Or it may have been the outcome of an intellect steeped in the theories of 'honest dissimulation' that became popular in the courts and cultural centres of Catholic Europe during his lifetime. But despite the divergent paths that the two men's lives took, they both were forced to confront the range of contradictions that their status as converts from Judaism posed alongside their vows of obedience to the hierarchy of the church. Even in Counter-Reformation Italy, men like Orlandini, who abandoned his biological parents to become a 'son' of the Franciscan order, quickly learned the bitter lesson that

they were not entirely protected by their sacerdotal robes and that the stigma of their birth was just as keenly felt inside the clerical estate as outside of it.[36]

Notes

1 BAV, Urb.Lat. 1060 II, f. 455r, f. 466r, f. 473r, f. 474v, f. 514r, f. 536, f. 583; Von Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, vol. 24, pp. 148–52, pp. 218–21, mentions the new census of the Jews; on the famine, pp. 367–74; D. Beggiao, *La visita pastorale di Clemente VIII. Aspetti della riforma post-Tridentina a Roma* (Rome: Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1978); on the famine, which was driven both by a temporary scarcity of wheat and the European price revolution, see the classic J. Delumeau, *La vie économique et sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Boccard, 1959), vol. 2, pp. 598–650; the measures promulgated against the Jewish community in Rome were a prelude to the last of the bulls of expulsion from the papal states, *Caeca et Obdurata*, issued in 1593; Segre, 'La Controriforma', pp. 736–37.

2 R. de Maio, 'Alessandro Franceschi e il cardinale Pierre Gondi nella riconcilazione di Enrico IV', in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964), vol. 6, pp. 313–56, reprinted as 'La Curia Romana nella riconciliazione di Enrico IV', in *Miti e Riforme nella Chiesa del Cinquecento* (Naples: Guida, 1973), pp. 143–87, represents the first serious attempt to reconstruct the biography of Franceschi based on his own manuscripts. Since then, the entry by R. Mordenti in *DBI*, vol. 49, pp. 603–5, and the chapter devoted to Franceschi in G. M. Fusconi, *Forlì e suoi vescovi. Appunti e documentazione per la storia della Chiesa di Forlì* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2003), vol. 3, pp. 1061–94 have added further data, particularly regarding the periods before and after Franceschi's diplomatic mission to Florence in 1592, the central topic of De Maio's article.

3 On Pablo Christiani, see R. Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992); on Pablo de Santa Maria and Alonso de Cartagena, see N. Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2002); in the German-speaking parts of Early Modern Europe a series of similar cases as the theological debates over the Reformation heated up, both sides prized Jewish converts who could serve as symbolic testimony of the rightness of their cause; see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, pp. 54–62.

4 On the Jews of Rome before the construction of the ghetto, see A. Esposito, *Un'altra Roma. Minoranze nazionali e communità ebraiche tra Medioevo e Cinquecento* (Rome: Il calamo, 1995).

5 S. Simonsohn, 'Some Well-Known Jewish Converts During the Renaissance', *Revue des études juives*, 148 (1989), pp. 17–52, 31–8, the mandate issued by Paul III for the capture of Giusta di Servadio is included in the appendix with other documents relating to Franceschi's father, who after baptism was known as Alessandro Franceschi or Alessandro da Foligno, pp. 44–9. Simonsohn identifies Hananel's profession as moneylending, and the evidence he presents suggests that economic interests may have played a role in Hananel's decision to convert.

6 BAV, Ottob.Lat. 2452, f. 161, letter from Alessandro Franceschi to Guglielmo Sirleto, dated March 18, 1573:

> intorno all'elemosina per la casa dei catecumini et neofiti, dimostrandole anco in buona parte l'importanza di quell'opera, et l'estrema povertà et necessità in che si trova; dicendole che ancor in Napoli io havevo raccomandato quest'opera, et che oltre a i molti rispetti per i quali sono obligato aiutarla, mi stringe molto l'esser io di quella natione, et essere stata quest'opera quasi che eretta et in buona parte argomentata dalla bona memoria di mio padre.

The letter is transcribed in its entirety in R. de Maio, 'La Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana sotto Paolo IV e Pio IV', in *Collectanea Vaticana in honorem Anselmi M. Card. Albareda a Bibliotheca Apostolica edita* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1962), pp. 306–7.

7 Maryks, *The Jesuit Order*, pp. 42–6.

8 D. Bartoli, *Della Vita e dell'Istituto di Sant'Ignazio Fondatore della Compagnia di Giesu Libri Cinque* (Rome, 1659), p. 272–3; *Monumenta Ignatiana, Series Quarta* (Madrid: Del Horno, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 574–5.

9 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4678, 'Dialogo tra cristiano e giudeo', dated September 4, 1559, f. 2v-3r. The Christian's

exhortation to the Jew to 'faccia oratione a Dio che illumini gli occhi della mente tua a conoscere la verità' recalls the 'eyes of the imagination' to which Ignatius granted a central role in his spirituality; Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. G. E. Ganss (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), pp. 141, 146.

10 On Franceschi's fame as a preacher, see De Maio, 'Alessandro Franceschi e il cardinale Pierre Gondi', pp. 315–16; one of his admirers was Francesco Maria II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, who wrote the following in a letter to Sirleto dated April 7, 1578: 'Il Padre Mastro Alessandro Franceschi c'ha predicato qua questa quaresima con haver data cosi piena sodisfattione a me, et a tutta questa mia città del valore, et virtù sua, che maggiore non si sarria potuta desiderare …' (BAV, Vat.Lat. 6183 I, f. 263).

11 ACDF, Decreta Sancti Officii, vol. 28 (1592), f. 201, f. 228r; Franceschi's first appearance at a meeting of the congregation was on May 13th, f. 170r.

12 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4669, f. 19–34, 44–50, 50–4.

13 De Maio, 'Alessandro Franceschi e il cardinale Pierre Gondi', pp. 316–41.

14 G. M. Pio, *Delle vite degli huomini illustri di San Domenico libri quattro* (Bologna, 1620), p. 335.

15 A. Ricciullo, *Tractatus de iure personarum extra ecclesiae existentium* (Rome, 1622), p. 610. Ricciullo cites Juan de Torquemada, Alfonso de Hoyeda, and Simon Majoli as among the legal authorities who held this view.

16 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4667, f. 14–16; see Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, pp. 139–43, and M. Caffiero, 'Madri ebree e diritti sui figli in età moderna. Alle radici storiche di una questione contemporanea', *Storia delle donne*, 1 (2005), pp. 159–67, on the problem of parental rights over children when only one member of a couple converted.

17 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4667, f. 136r–138v.

18 Fusconi, *Forli e suoi vescovi*, vol. 3, p. 1082; the diary was written by Girolamo Aspini, a lawyer.

19 Mordenti, *DBI*, pp. 604–5; there are scattered records of Franceschi's episcopacy in ASV, Vescovi e Regolari, Positiones, 1598. I was unable to obtain access to the episcopal archive in Forli, which remains closed to scholars.

20 Ricciullo, *Tractatus de iure personarum extra ecclesiae existentium*, pp. 611–12.

21 A. A. Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2010), pp. 141, 152–3, 187–91, 197–8, 208, 216, 268; Maryks, *The Jesuit Order*, pp. 1–31.

22 Maryks, *The Jesuit Order*, pp. 117–43.

23 BAV. Vat.Lat. 4667, f. 13.

24 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4670, f. 47. The texts in this volume are anonymous, and it is impossible to identify their authors or determine whether they were in fact written by Franceschi himself.

25 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4670, f. 47–8.

26 P. Broggio, *La teologia e la politica. Controversie dottrinali, curia romana e monarchia spagnola tra Cinque e Seicento* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2009); see also the account of the controversy in von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 24, pp. 281–367.

27 BAV, Vat.Lat. 4670, f. 120; the author of the text does not describe the loyalties or program of the faction, which in addition to Benedetto Palmio, included the following names: Oliviero, Claudio Mattos, Annibale Codret, Domenech (who belonged to the pro-converso faction), Mendoza, Resingucci, Bisciola, Malavolta, Buonaccorto, and Faraone. On Palmio's leadership of the anti-converso faction, see Maryks, *The Jesuit Order*, pp. 131–35.

28 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 1117, f. 462: Maurizio Giribaldi to Cosimo III, letter dated August 26, 1690; see the entry on Paolo Sebastiano Medici by L. Saracco in *DBI*, vol. 73, pp. 149–51.

29 E. Goldberg, *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence: The Secret World of Benedetto Blanis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) recounts the life of Benedetto Blanis, another member of the family living in the ghetto during the same period.

30 The early biography and conversion of Graziadio di David Blanis and his sister Laura has been carefully reconstructed in Marconcini, 'La storia della pia casa', pp. 139–45.

31 ASPF, SOCG 354, f. 236, letter dated November 26, 1658, doc. 8 in appendix.

32 ASPF, SOCG 354, f. 245.

33 ASPF, SOCG 354, f. 237, 238.

34 On the crime of *sollicitatio ad turpia*, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, see G. Romeo,

L'Inquisizione nell'Italia moderna (Bari: Laterza, 2002), pp. 74–7, 97–9, and S. Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

35 The trial of Orlandini is detailed in A. Prosperi, 'Ebrei a Pisa. Dalle carte dell'Inquisizione Romana', in M. Luzzati (ed.), *Gli Ebrei di Pisa (secoli IX–XX): atti del convegno internazionale, Pisa, 3–4 Ottobre 1994* (Pisa: Pacini, 1998), pp. 117–57, 151–3.

36 Orlandini asked the congregation of Propaganda Fide to make him a 'son' of the monastery of Santa Croce. Giulio Morosini, the author of *Via della Fede*, sent a similar appeal to the same congregation; while he lay dying in Rome, Morosini asked to be buried in the chapel of the college, a privilege that he requested 'as a son of the same Congregation', letter dated September 3, 1686; ASPF, SOCG 495A, f. 262.

4 The Strange Tale of the Alpine Turncoat

Johann Heinrich Ruegg and the Roman Inquisition

The three major routes into the Italian peninsula from the Alps—the Cenis, St Gotthard, and Brenner passes—were among the most heavily trafficked passageways in Western Europe during the early modern period, thoroughfares for the transfer of large numbers of goods and people into and out of Italy, for merchants and travellers, criminals and vagabonds, and soldiers. As more than one observer in Italy recognized, the vast number of men and women crossing the Alps into the peninsula every year contained a disturbing number of Protestants, often travelling with Catholic companions, whose very presence risked 'infecting' the cities of Italy. Officials like the inquisitor of Milan recognized that they were positioned at a strategic crossroads:

> the greatness and opulence of this city, noble emporium of all of the surrounding areas, and the vicinity of this state to Germany … together with the desire that the foreign nations have to see the beauties of Italy, lead me to believe unfortunately that many heretics set foot here, which is the first gateway into Italy, and this obliges me and all of the other inquisitors to be very vigilant.[1]

Throughout the seventeenth century, ecclesiastical authorities searched for ways to combat the dangers and capitalize on the opportunities of an extensive frontier with their confessional rivals; as the century progressed, the flow of converts who arrived in the peninsula asking to abjure their religion and join the Catholic Church continued unabated. The assorted inquisitors, confessors, missionaries and episcopal judges who were often among the first to encounter the foreigners who came into the peninsula found that evaluating the religious identity, personal histories, and credibility of the converts who arrived at their doors was not a simple task. Deciding how best to allocate the time and resources of the Holy Office, distinguishing potential heretics from ordinary

Catholics, and evaluating the testimony and intentions of the men and women who came before them on their own or were denounced by others required that they be ready to quickly form an opinion based on a few scattered elements.

A basic questionnaire for converts (which could also be adopted outside of the courtroom by confessors or missionaries who performed an analogous role) appears in one of the most widely used inquisitorial manuals of the period, Eliseo Masini's *Sacred Arsenal* (1621). After emphasizing that

> whoever, spontaneously appears before the Inquisitor, and freely confesses his errors and heresies, in which he was raised and taught in particular by his parents, should not be treated by the judge but in the most benign way, and pleasantly treated, and paternally released, without the rigor of prison, expense, torture, or penalties of any kind,

Masini offered a template for interrogating converts who came before the tribunal of their own will. They should be asked to list all of the heresies they had adhered to and identify the sects that they belonged to. They should then be asked what they now believe and be required to list and explain the articles of faith of the Catholic Church in order to demonstrate that they understood the difference between true and false religion. Finally, before signing the certificate of absolution, the inquisitor would require that the convert provide the names of any heretics he knew to be living in Catholic territory and ask if he needed any further instruction.[2] Masini's set of questions was ideal for what many inquisitors considered a bureaucratic formality, a banal ceremony which, especially in large cities, would be repeated numerous times over the course of months and often entrusted to minor officials or delegates while the inquisitor took care of more pressing and complicated matters. The questions focused almost entirely on the formal and theological aspects of conversion and gave little or no attention to the context of the conversion or the personal circumstances of the convert.

Yet ecclesiastical officials also recognized that there were many other factors at work behind even those conversions that were freely and 'spontaneously' given. Inquisitors often felt compelled to record the words of converts with qualifiers that suggested the implausibility of the convert's words or their own inability to verify them.[3] When Angelo Maria Durini, the head of the Milanese ospizio enacted a reform of the institute's procedures in 1749, he called attention to the fact that the existing procedures for accepting converts and certifying their abjurations were insufficient, subject to numerous abuses by men and women who misunderstood, either intentionally or not, the nature of the commitment they were making:

> In short, there are very few, in fact exceedingly few, who according to their own words give any indication of having a true vocation to become Catholics, for the sole purpose of knowing the truth of our Holy Catholic faith. On the contrary, there is reason to doubt that many are induced by the

misery in which they find themselves ...[4]

He pointed to examples of converts who viewed abjuration as a mere opportunity to obtain food, clothing, and shelter, or who repeatedly abjured or were baptized in order to be able to repeatedly collect the 'alms' that the institute distributed. In order to combat this problem, the institute attempted to make its procedures more rigorous, requiring converts to provide documents that proved their identity and instituting harsh penalties for those who lied about their past or misrepresented themselves in any way. Most importantly, the administrators drew up a new set of questions for converts that was more explicitly focused on the lives of converts rather than their beliefs. It included the following:

1. What is his name and family name; what are the names and family names of his parents.
2. What is his homeland; where is it and under the control of which lord.
3. Regarding his age, his parents' religion, and his own.
4. How he was educated and which profession or trade he practiced.
5. How long he remained in his homeland, how he left, and the reason for the departure.
6. Let him describe his travels minutely and the sojourns that he made in other countries.
7. How he behaved in Catholic countries; with whom did he live and what kind of life did he lead?
8. If he witnessed any ceremony practiced by Catholics in Catholic countries, let him describe it and say what sort of feeling he developed towards it, and if he spoke about it with anyone, let him say who and what was said.
9. After hearing the description of his travels deposed as above, let him say how long he has been in Milan.

The questionnaire concluded with a brief examination of the converts' knowledge of basic Catholic doctrines and those of their former religion.[5] The subtle changes in the kinds of questions being asked to converts indicate that inquisitors and other members of the clergy were becoming more sensitive to a series of basic and interconnected problems of conversion, including dissimulation and the use of conversion to pursue other ends. They had become more conscious of the entirely worldly motivations that intermingled with, and often compromised, spiritual ones. For the rectors of the hospice in Milan, part of the solution lay in creating a highly specific record of each conversion, composed of official documents and a precise account of the convert's own words, that served as a record against which later claims and

alternative versions could be compared and evaluated.

The questionnaire also highlights the vexing problems of mobility and control that were peculiar to converts. The Counter-Reformation church, which persisted in the habit of identifying the inhabitants of the society it governed with the territory they inhabited, were much less well-prepared to deal with individuals who were rootless and constantly on the move, and many converts, in particular those who arrived from Northern Europe, fell into this category.[6] They often lacked firm points of reference in local society, patrons, families and neighbours, who could bind them in ties of mutual obligation and who might serve the function of helping to consolidate the identity of a convert in a new place and with a new set of social, economic, and religious commitments. Furthermore, by their very nature, converts demonstrated the possibility of crossing—violating—the very boundaries that the confessional churches, both Protestant and Catholic, put in place and which religious and civil authorities did their best to reinforce. Every flight across the Alps was fraught with ambiguities that are easily intuited in the probing questions drawn up by the Milanese clergy.

Both of these themes in the history of conversion, the pliability of individual autobiographies and the ambiguous boundaries separating religious groups, are present in a case from the second half of the seventeenth century which counts among the most detailed and evocative individual stories to emerge from the Roman archives. Through the conversion (and reconversion) of a single individual and the complex and shifting reactions of the Roman authorities who guided and observed him, we can see what really occupied the space between the apparently incommunicable worlds of Rome and Zurich, and the compromises, deceptions, and transformations that were required of those who sought to pass from one to the other.

* * *

The protagonist of this story, Johann Heinrich Ruegg, was born into a Calvinist family in Zurich in the mid-seventeenth century and became a pastor as a young man, following his father's example.[7] For reasons that remain unclear, after beginning what must have been a promising career as a Protestant minister, he decided to convert to Catholicism in 1669, and the following year travelled to Rome, where he enrolled in the Collegio Urbano de Propaganda Fide, an institution designed specifically for the education of missionaries.[8] He studied there alongside seminarians from Goa, Lebanon, and the Dalmatian coast, and at the end was ordained and sent back to Switzerland to serve as a parish priest in one of the towns along the border with Protestant territory. It was a standard practice for the graduates of Propaganda Fide to be

sent back among the people they had left behind, newly trained in Catholic doctrine but with a native's knowledge of the local language and customs. Unquestionably, Ruegg's superiors hoped that he would prove a powerful example for others to follow, a living witness to the truth of Catholicism who could be used to persuade and convince.

However, once in Switzerland, Ruegg changed his mind; in 1675, he returned to Zurich and made a formal return to Calvinism, including a public sermon of revocation (*Revokationspredigt*), a central feature of conversion ceremonies in many Protestant congregations that often combined lurid images of greedy friars and Catholic moral decay with testimony of spiritual enlightenment and rebirth.[9] His conversion was even officially recognized by the city council, which recorded the event in one of its meetings. An Italian translation of the sermon eventually made its way back to Rome, leaving little doubt as to what Ruegg had said in a very public way:

> And since for five years in an act of indiscretion which can never be excused or justified, I remained five years in the evil papacy, wherein I totally penetrated that abominable desolation … I renounce, impugn, despise, and condemn all of the doctrines and lies of the papacy, which have been revealed by our most pious reformers.[10]

Not long after the revocation sermon, he also married, violating another of his vows and placing a further distance between himself and the Catholic Church. It was a provocative conversion, and one which probably left authorities in Rome with little hope that they would ever see Ruegg again; he had abandoned the church in a far too public way, and news of his apostasy had spread into other parts of Switzerland, forcing the church onto the defensive.[11] If conversions could be considered points in an endless, ongoing game between the Catholic and Reformed churches, Ruegg's defection back to Zurich was a score against Rome.

The visibility of Ruegg's return to the Reformed Church made what happened afterwards even more surprising. A few months after the public conversion, a letter from Ruegg arrived in Rome, forwarded by the nuncio in Luzern who had first received it. From the opening words, it was clear that something had changed: 'Most illustrious and very reverend my most loyal and most honourable lord' (a salutation that was ingratiating and servile even by the standards of the day). In the letter, Ruegg revealed that he had repented his decision and was preparing to leave Zurich and return southward. Someone had already gotten wind of his plans, and he was afraid of being discovered. But he was unperturbed:

> I will leave Zurich, even if an army were to stand in my way, and leave me wounded. At very least it would make up for the stain of my idiocy in scandalizing the whole Catholic world. In any case, do not write me any more, for I will arrive soon.

Ruegg fully realized the dangers of his position—those who had relapsed into heresy could be sentenced to death, though the Holy Office had largely ceased to hand down such brutal punishments—and he was looking for allies who could help him make his case once he returned to Italy, men who were in contact with the right people and could vouch for his good faith. He begged the official to get in contact with several acquaintances in Rome who he thought might be of help: The first was the captain of the Swiss Guards, a countryman who he had probably met during his years in Rome and who was in frequent contact with cardinals and high-ranking prelates, not to mention the pope himself. The second was the rector of the Collegio Urbano, his former teacher and someone who might be counted on for help:

> Since he is no less desirous of my salvation, I am sure that if he knew my desire [to return], as a man who is truly jealous of the honour of God he would not ignore even the most seemingly insignificant thing that could be done in my favour, especially since he is so well liked by a number of cardinals.

He thanked his correspondent for any favour he could do on his behalf and for 'liberating him from this Babylon', reversing one of the traditional negative stereotypes of the papacy and using it against one of the capitals of the Reformed Church. Finally, Ruegg closed the letter with another revelation, warning his correspondent in a postscript:

> The simpleton who is carrying this letter is a heretic, and he believes that he's carrying a letter from a merchant of this city, so I beg you not to say a word of me to him, nor to give him a letter to take back, since if things go as planned, I will have already left by the time he returns.[12]

This extraordinary piece of testimony demonstrates that Ruegg, an extremely well-educated convert who was capable of speaking several languages, fully recognized the nature of the obstacles he faced in attempting to retract his decision and return to the Catholic Church. He also knew that his reconversion to Calvinism had compromised his relationships with the friends and supporters in Rome who had shown him favour in the past. Yet he still held out hope that he might be able to convince authorities in Italy, and he recognized that the difference between a papal pardon and a sentence to the galleys of the Inquisition, or worse, lay entirely in the byzantine politics of the Roman curia and his ability to successfully manoeuvre within it. For his part, the rector of the Collegio Urbano reacted positively: A note attached to the letter records that he 'exulted when he learned that Ruegg, who he had believed lost, had been reborn and returned to the font of verity'.[13] And by the time Ruegg arrived in Catholic territory, in the palace of the papal nuncio Odoardo Cibo in Luzern, Cibo had received permission from the Holy Office in Rome and from Urbano Cerri, the secretary of Propaganda Fide, to pardon Ruegg for 'such an execrable excess' as long as he 'repented in his heart'. Cerri promised that the Holy Office would not condemn Ruegg to any temporal

penalties since he had returned to the church of his own will, only grant him a series of 'salutary' penances that would expiate his sins but spare him any imprisonment or other punishments.[14]

With these generous guarantees in hand, Ruegg began his journey southward, back towards Rome. In July, the bishop of Genoa wrote to the secretary of Propaganda Fide to inform him that the repentant convert had arrived recently in the city. He had given Ruegg 18 scudi (equivalent to a few hundred dollars) and sent the convert down the coast to Livorno, in the direction of Rome, where he probably arrived later that month or at the beginning of the following one. Upon arrival, Cerri placed him in the Lazarist convent in the centre of the city, 'so that from their [the friars'] example he might strengthen his piety and recognize the error he has committed'.[15] Though he was kept under Cerri's watchful eye, he was still allowed to move about the city when accompanied, and in December, the Holy Office granted him a generous pension of 100 scudi per annum, which was justified by the necessity of supporting his wife and children. Only later did it emerge that Ruegg's behaviour during this period was at times erratic and irresponsible, foreshadowing problems to come: He had been accused of swindling other guests of the convent, and he often came home drunk.[16]

On the night of November 6, perhaps following an argument, Ruegg borrowed some money from another guest in the convent and left Rome without telling anyone where he was headed. When this shocking jailbreak was discovered, the curia shifted into full alarm, and the sentiments of paternalistic tolerance towards the wayward convert were quickly replaced with a desire for rapid and exemplary punishment. In a letter that Cerri sent the following week to the assessor of the Holy Office, he revealed that Innocent XI had personally ordered that Ruegg be brought back to Rome and 'mortified as he deserves'.[17] With these instructions, Cerri sent letters to all of the papal nuncios in Italy and several local officials and inquisitors, describing the fugitive's appearance and requesting that he be immediately arrested if found. The letter was sent to the nuncio or inquisitor of nearly every major city in Italy—Naples, Ancona, Livorno, Florence, Bologna, and Venice—all places with large populations where it was easy for a foreigner to hide or blend in anonymously and, more importantly, ports and crossroads from which it would be easy to find the means to travel further. In the weeks that followed, responses to Cerri's letter arrived one after another, each reporting extensive but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to find Ruegg. Among others, the inquisitor of Genoa promised to search for Ruegg not only in the city, but in every part of the territory of the Republic.[18] In a relatively short time, the papal bureaucracy was able to unleash a vast manhunt involving the officials of the Inquisition, the nunciatures, and an assorted collection of spies and public officials, which,

nevertheless, proved unable to bring about Ruegg's capture. Less than a week after he left, word reached the officials of Propaganda Fide that he was hiding in an inn outside of Parma, but by the time they were able to send a message northward, the trail had run cold.[19]

Finally, on November 24, word arrived in Rome that Ruegg had been captured in Bellinzona, a town at the foot of the St Gotthard pass, just inside the border of the archdiocese of Milan and probably the last place in which inquisitors still could claim jurisdiction and place him under arrest. Within a few days, he had been brought back to Milan, where he remained in prison for three months while the cardinal inquisitors discussed the complex logistics of transferring their quick-witted and resourceful prisoner to Rome for trial without giving him further opportunities to escape.[20] By the beginning of April, Ruegg was back in Rome, in the prisons of the Holy Office, and his trial began the following month.[21] Due to the destruction of the majority of the trial records of the tribunal of the Holy Office in Rome, there is no way to know exactly what occurred during the course of the trial. Forced to defend himself against the accusation of relapsing into heresy, a capital crime, Ruegg faced difficult odds, especially given the pope's determination that he be punished. His own strategy of defence can be inferred from what he told the inquisitor in Milan at the time of his arrest: He had intended to ask for permission to leave the convent in Rome but couldn't reach any of the cardinals, who were locked away in conclave at the time. He then decided to depart for home, but without any desire to abandon the Catholic faith in which he had always intended to live and die. In so many words, his escape from Rome, whatever may have provoked it (including money he may have owed or enemies he was keen to avoid), was not part of a plan to return to Zurich and abandon the church a second time.[22]

At best, Ruegg found himself in an extremely delicate situation. Legal theory and precedents stretching back into the Middle Ages were unanimous in recognizing the gravity of relapsing into heresy, but equivocal regarding what kind of punishment fit the crime. The early seventeenth-century jurist Prospero Farinacci recognized that while capital punishment was the norm, an exception could be made in the case of those who came to the Inquisition to confess their crimes on their own rather than being apprehended.[23] Cardinal Francesco Albizzi (1593–1684), a member of the Congregation of the Holy Office during Ruegg's trial, expressed a more conciliatory view, one that may well have prevailed during the course of the trial. In a compendium of case law, he recalled a trial from the 1660s that closely resembled Ruegg's. An unnamed Swiss priest had fled Rome for Zurich, where he converted to Calvinism, took a wife, and remained for seven years. When he returned contritely to Rome, he was allowed to abjure but was later caught fleeing

towards Switzerland, where he claimed he wanted to reunite with his wife. In this case, Albizzi recounted, the cardinal inquisitors opted not to convict the priest of relapsing into heresy, as there was no way to prove what his intentions were when he fled from Rome.[24]

Though the final sentence in the trial is missing, it seems that Ruegg was considered culpable, though he ultimately avoided the 'mortification' promised to him by Innocent XI.[25] The last two decrees regarding the case indicate that Cerri attempted to have his sentence commuted in October, and within a few months, he was removed from prison and brought to the palace of the Holy Office, where he was kept under guard while the nuncio in Luzern arranged for a new position for him in Switzerland.[26] The fury to punish a reprobate that had driven the Holy Office during the search for Ruegg had attenuated, as it often did, during the course of the trial, and in the end, the many misdeeds for which he was considered responsible were repaid with a year of reclusion, first in prison, and later in more comfortable circumstances. With that, the documentary record of a complex and highly ambiguous conversion, one that severely tested the church's jealous control of its image and the delicate institutional structures and intrapersonal networks that had been put in place to guide converts, comes to a close. In all likelihood, Ruegg was allowed to return to Switzerland, where he would have remained under the watchful eye of the papal nuncio. There are no traces of evidence regarding the fate of Ruegg's wife and children, perhaps out of a wilful attempt to ignore or suppress the memory of what amounted to embarrassing reminders of his return to Calvinism.

Even a relatively complete and detailed documentary record leaves many questions unanswered. Was Johann Ruegg a confused soul or a calculating profiteer or some combination of the two? And what purpose might his multiple changes of heart have disguised? Why did he decide to leave Rome in the autumn of 1676? Most of the people with whom he interacted on the Protestant side remain in the shadows, their identities and allegiances largely hidden from view, leaving us to wonder at the nature of the entanglements which led to his revocation sermon and possibly to the flight from Rome as well. Yet aside from the gaps in our understanding of the events and the inscrutable motivations and perceptions of the convert, the narrative provides quite a lot of clear evidence about his experience. Ruegg's words and actions convey a portrait of a convert who, despite his youth, was equally well versed in the protocols of the Roman curia and the Swiss Kirchenrat, highly literate, and able to quickly adapt to different cultures. He also possessed the necessary skills to survive in the dangerous situations in which he found himself: an instinct for where to turn in a moment of need and an informed understanding of the power structures which would determine his fate. Most importantly, he

possessed an ability to manage his appearance and offer the proper sentiments for the circumstances in which he found himself: Just as he switched easily between German and Italian, he was equally quick to exchange the language of Protestant anti-papal rhetoric for that of Catholic penance and obedience.

* * *

Despite Ruegg's obvious skill in playing the roles that his status as a convert in Zurich, Luzern, and Rome required and the willingness of the experienced administrators of the Holy Office and Propaganda Fide to accept his version of the facts, this does not mean that they necessarily believed what he was saying. What mattered to ecclesiastical authorities, despite their insistence on an exact record in the procedures of the Inquisition (which was to remain secret), was the opportunity to construct a version of events that could be used to the church's benefit, one that preserved the unambiguous and edifying image of conversion that it promoted. There were numerous precedents, and the church possessed a rich trove of archetypes and narrative templates that could be applied to new events, even in cases with the disturbing twists and ambiguities that Ruegg's contained. To give one example, the massive compendium of conversion stories published in the 1680s by the Oratorian friar Girolamo Bascapè contains several stories with plot lines that in some way recall certain elements of Ruegg's biography. One was the story of a nobleman who attempted multiple times to convert to Lutheranism but was blocked by a providential inability to speak. In another, Bascapè recounted the story of a Lutheran minister who left his native Poland in 1575 and headed for Rome during the jubilee year as a 'wolf in sheep's clothes' who was intent on finding material for his sermons against the pope. 'Having transformed himself on the outside into that which he was not on the inside', and driven by a 'lively curiosity', he arrived in the Eternal City with a group of pilgrims. The Lutheran's stay in the city followed a perfect symbolic arc; the examples of moral perfection and Christian charity that he encountered in the city gradually overcame his hostility, and he confessed his heresy and his trickery to Gregory XIII, who absolved him just in time for the convert to fall sick and die, blessedly, in one of the hospitals that had been set up to welcome pilgrims to the city.[27]

The two stories, like every other in this enormous collection, followed several rules. First, the convert might fall victim to failings and temptations but always made a full and unequivocal adherence to Catholicism, either through a clearly defined break with the past or, as in the case of the Lutheran priest, through death. An exemplary tale of conversion could be measured by how definitive it was, and no conversion was more so than one that occurred

shortly before the death of the convert. Secondly, any element in the story that represented a potential ambiguity had to be either expunged from the record or interpreted in a way that granted it a positive meaning, as an obstacle placed by providence in the way of the sinner that would lead them to redemption. The material benefits that might have come to the convert were always incidental rather than motivating factors in the decision. First-person accounts of conversion, such as those of Justus Baronius, the German theologian who came to Rome in 1600 and received the patronage of Clement VIII, and Cardinal Baronio or the Saxon nobleman Christoph von Rantzau (see chapter 2) were often even more explicit in responding to the criticisms and insults of their former co-religionists. They described their own actions as inevitable, decisive, and permanent, while their adversaries and critics were motivated by rancour, greed, or ambition.

The public record of Ruegg's life was no exception. In the period immediately following the dramatic manhunt that led to his capture, he and his handlers worked to produce an official version of his life as a convert. The result, developed within the institutions of the Catholic Church in Italy and Switzerland, was an entirely whitewashed account that omitted major aspects of the history of double identity and subterfuge in favour of an edifying and unequivocal tale of conversion and redemption. Ruegg's father, Johann Jakob, like his son a Calvinist pastor, converted in 1676 while his son was travelling to Rome for the second time and shortly thereafter became a client of Cibo in Luzern, who put him to work writing dense apologies for the Catholic faith in German and Latin; the following year, Cerri mentioned him in a report to the pope on the worldwide missions of the church.[28] In one of these pamphlets, a *Report to the Council of Zurich on His Conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith*, the elder Ruegg boasted of his son's education at the Collegio Urbano, his superior theological training, and what he euphemistically described as a 'dangerous' mission to Zurich, where he recovered a number of papers and books before 'returning to Luzern as a true son into the lap of the Catholic Church'.[29] The elder Ruegg omitted any mention of his son's brief return to Calvinism, his marriage, or the public revocation sermon he had given. But his version of the story, the only one ever published, maintained a tenacious hold in Catholic circles. Over twenty-five years later, the Capuchin Provincial Luciano Montifontano commemorated both men in a Latin epigram: 'Ruegg, who as an old man could not explain away the compelling arguments of his son, converted to the Church, and joined his son'.[30] Once again, Catholic authorities, acting independently and in concert, did their best to replace doubts with certainty, using rhetoric to make up for the defects of reality.

* * *

Stepping back from the intense battle of words in which Ruegg was both object and participant, his extraordinary life stands out precisely for what it reveals about the mechanics of religious conversion and the numerous grey zones which existed along religious borders that both sides did their utmost to depict as distinct and impermeable. For the authorities in Zurich, Rome, and Luzern, as well as the numerous other cities in which Ruegg stopped along his picaresque journeys, the worlds of the Catholic South and the Protestant North were separated not only by the immense physical boundary of the Alps but also by a no less profound series of political, cultural, and religious thresholds. For Calvinists looking southward from Zurich and Catholics looking north from Rome and Milan, their religious rivals were the most immediate symbol of the destructive tensions of the previous century and the greatest impediment to the unity of believers in Christ. Each side served as a perpetual symbol of falsehood, deception, and blindness—a powerful set of negative images which was as effective a tool for forming a sense of collective identity as any of the positive attributes which each group ascribed to itself. These dichotomies were enforced more from above, by the authorities of church and state, than felt from below and enforced on both sides by a series of institutions and procedures—on the Catholic side, the papal nuncios, inquisitors, and missionaries who, each within their specific roles, worked in unison to filter and direct the flow of information, ideas, and people in and out of Italy and the Catholic cantons of Switzerland. At the same time, at a further remove, institutions such as the Collegio Urbano and the Collegio Elvetico in Milan served as training grounds for converts and aspiring clergy who intended to return to the borderlands.

On the Protestant side, a different set of priorities reigned. Authorities in Basel, Geneva, and Zurich tended to demonstrate an attitude of disinterested tolerance towards most sects that were not Catholic, counterbalanced by an unmitigated hostility towards the pope. The Swiss cities' commercial ties with Italy and removal from the most acute geopolitical struggles involving the major European powers meant that some of the tension that surrounded religious differences in Italy was attenuated, but their ruling élites still wanted to keep track of who passed through their territory, prevent the circulation of dangerous or inflammatory books and ideas, and interrogate those who came from what was perceived as hostile territory, whatever their professed intentions. In Ruegg's case, it was the city council that was responsible for certifying his conversion, but in the years immediately after his defection, many of the Protestant cities in Switzerland had begun to develop institutions for converts that served the same function as the Italian *ospizi* . City governments founded *Proselytenkammer* in Bern in 1681, Zurich in 1692, and Geneva in 1708 and placed them under the control of lay bureaucrats, clergy,

and theologians. Their purpose was to provide religious instruction to converts immediately after their conversions, and financial assistance and training in a craft that could sustain them afterwards, a range of activities roughly analogous to those of their Catholic counterparts.[31] Like the Italian institutes, they also functioned both as a means of assimilation and control and defence against outsiders. The background to Ruegg's life was very clearly a divided Europe in which local élites staked their claims to authority on the defence of the state church and the protection of it from hostile forces, a continent whose political borders were largely based on religious differences.

But when we move from the scale of major events and processes to the seemingly minor and contingent events that make up Ruegg's story, other elements become visible that blur these boundaries and alter the image described earlier. The improbable twists of fate, ambiguities, and contradictions of the convert's flight and return reveal that this border was neither as distinct nor as strong as it might appear. There were real limits to the kinds of control which authorities could exercise. From the Roman officials of Propaganda Fide and the Inquisition, who could never quite summon the will to punish Ruegg, to the nuncio and bishops who struggled to keep track of his movements, every official involved in the manhunt discovered that it was far easier to be a fugitive in the Alps in the late seventeenth century than to track one down. There were plenty of reasons why these authorities might have chosen to follow the course of action that they did, from a sense of genuine sympathy for the individual in question, to a desire to wait and see rather than act immediately, or a misguided overconfidence. But they also simply lacked the manpower, organization, and technical wherewithal of a twentieth or twenty-first century state. They acted on information that they received days and sometimes weeks after it had been sent, depended on shadowy go-betweens of uncertain loyalties, and possessed limited resources which they needed to use to meet a wide range of responsibilities. The truth is that for an enterprising convert such as Ruegg, capable of quick thinking and skilled at adapting to different environments and interlocutors, there were plenty of places and opportunities where the borders that divided Europe into confessional blocs were fraying, full of holes, or non-existent.

Notes

1 Letter from the inquisitor of Milan, Giovan Michele Pio, to the Congregation of the Holy Office, June 1627, ACDF, St. St. M4-b, f. 439, quoted in Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, pp. 147–8.

2 E. Masini, *Sacro Arsenale overo Prattica dell'Officio della Santa Inquisitione* (Rome, 1639), pp. 87–94. The manual, first published in 1621 and reissued periodically throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was for a long time the only one available in Italian rather than Latin.

3 I. Fosi, 'Conversion and Autobiography. Telling Tales before the Roman Inquisition', *The Journal of Early Modern History*, 17 (2013), pp. 437–56.

4 ASDM, Catecum. 12, ff.nn., doc. 5 in appendix.

5 Ibid., doc. 6 in appendix.

6 See in particular, K. Siebenhuner, 'Conversion, Mobility, and the Roman Inquisition in Italy around 1600', *Past and Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 5–35 and Fosi, *Convertire*, pp. 147–76. On the 'territorial' nature of the Tridentine church, see E. Brambilla, *Alle Origini del Sant'Uffizio. Penitenza, confessione, e giustizia spirituale dal medioevo al XVI secolo* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2000) and A. Torre, *Il consumo di devozioni. Religione e comunità nelle campagne dell'ancien regime* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995).

7 Johann Heinrich Ruegg's life has until now been overshadowed by that of his father, Johann Jakob, first profiled in Räss, *Die Convertiten*, vol. 8, pp. 95–114 and more recently by H. Bock, *Konversionen in der fruhneuzeitlichen Eindgenossenschaft. Zurich und Luzern im konfessionellen Vergleich* (Epfendorf: Bibliotheca Academica Verlag, 2008), pp. 335–50, based on new material from the municipal archives in Zurich. Johann Jakob's conversion to Catholicism followed that of his son, but his prolific output as an author of apologetic materials made his story more immediately accessible to scholars.

8 The years of Ruegg's conversion and enrollment in the college are reported in Bock, *Konversionen in der fruhneuzeitlichen Eindgenossenschaft*, pp. 342–43.

9 On the importance of revocation sermons in conversions to Protestantism in German-speaking countries, see G. Carl, 'Catholic-Lutheran-Catholic, Strategies of Justification and Conceptions of the Self in the Conversion Narratives of Johannes Ferdinand Franz Weinberger (1687–90)', *The Medieval History Journal*, 12 (2009), pp. 327–53; in particular pp. 332–33; numerous printed exemplars of these sermons have survived, i.e. M. Fabrus, *Vale papa tu salve Luthere, das ist Papstisch valet und evangelischer antritt zu Mergentheimb, oder Christliche Revocations Predigt* (Heilbronn, 1634).

10 ASPF, Collegio Urbano 1, f. 595

11 ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 1: Letter from Cerri to Luzern, January 14, 1676. The letter reports that another missionary priest sent by Propaganda Fide to Switzerland had to be removed from his post because of 'the discredit brought by the apostasy of Johann Heinrich Ruegg among those people'.

12 ASPF, Collegio Urbano 1, f. 661: Johann Heinrich Ruegg to Jacob Parissodus, Zurich, March 19, 1676. Parissodus was himself a convert and an alumnus of the Collegio Urbano (ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 14). The records of the Milanese Ospizio contain the name of Johannes Jacobus Parisodus, a pastor's son from Lausanne who received catechism and 95 lire from the institute in 1655 (ASDMi, Catecum. 12, ff.nn.).

13 ASPF, Collegio Urbano 1, f. 661: Johann Heinrich Ruegg to Jacob Parissodus, Zurich, March 19, 1676.

14 ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 22: letter from Cerri to Cibo, dated April 13, 1676; f. ACDF, Decreta Sancti Offici 1676, f. 121v: decree dated May 28, 1676. Cerri, secretary from 1675 to 1679, was the author of a general relation on the state of the missions that was translated and published in a number of European languages, see chapter 2. V. Belrose-Huygues, 'Les archives de la Propagande: une source pour l'histoire de l'Océan Indien sud-oriental (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)', *Melanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps Modernes*, 92 (1980), pp. 237–48.

15 ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 50: Cerri to Cibo, Rome, 1676, undated.

16 The pension is mentioned in ACDF, Decreta SO 1676, f. 231v; the reports of Ruegg's drunkenness and 'swindling' are in the letter dated December 15, 1676, from Cerri to Camillo Piazza, assessor of the Holy Office, announcing the convert's disappearance: ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 56.

17 Ibid. Innocent XI, whose entire pontificate was characterized by a pietistic and reformist turn, was to

prove to be an inflexible moralist when confronting other imperfect converts. When the Prince-Bishop of Osnabruck asked for material benefits in return for conversion in 1678, the pope rebuffed him, arguing that material concerns should never enter into the 'sacred affair of conversion'; von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, vol. 32, p. 475.

18 Cerri's letter is in ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 50, the responses are in ASPF, Collegio Urbano 1, f. 683 (Ludovico Sciamanna, Governor of Ancona), f. 685 (Nuncio in Florence), f. 687 (Nuncio in Naples), f. 689 (fra Tommaso Mazza, inquisitor of Genova), f. 691 (Giuseppe Mosti, Nuncio in Turin), f. 695 (Carlo Francesco Airoldi, Nuncio in Venice).

19 ASPF, Lettere 65, f. 50: Cerri to Camillo Piazza, assessor of the Holy Office, November 10, 1676.

20 ACDF, Decreta SO 1677, f. 25v, 43v, 62r: The members of the Congregation of the Holy Office carefully planned the transfer of Ruegg from Milan to Rome, scheduling his transfer from the Inquisitor of Milan to his counterparts in Ancona and Perugia, ensuring that most of the voyage took place within the boundaries of the Papal State and under the direct supervision of the Holy Office.

21 ACDF, Decreta SO 1677, f. 62r

22 ASPF, Collegio Urbano 1, f. 706, letter from Piazza to Cerri, December 15, 1676.

23 P. Farinacci, *Tractatus de Haeresi* (Antwerp, 1616), pp. 300–06.

24 F. Albizzi, *De inconstantia in fide admittenda, vel non* (Amsterdam, 1683), p. 89; see also the entry on Albizzi by A. Monticone in *DBI*, vol. 2, pp. 23–6.

25 On the degrees of culpability recognized by the Roman Inquisition and their importance in sentencing, see J. Tedeschi, 'The Organization and Procedures of the Roman Inquisition', in *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), pp. 127–204.

26 ACDF, Decreta SO 1677, f. 194, 232v; the second decree noted that Ruegg had a tendency to drunkenness ('facilis est ad ebrietatem').

27 G. Bascapè, *Sacre Metamorfosi* (Naples, 1683), vol. 4, pp. 131–37.

28 On Ruegg's father, see the works cited by Räss and Bock in note 7; in addition to the *Schreiben*, mentioned in note 29, he was the author of *Ausfuhrliche Erklahrung des hochwichtigen articuls von dem Besatz Gottes* (Luzern, 1677) and *Disquisitio Theologica de Forma Justificationis* (Luzern, 1687); he is mentioned in Cerri, *État present de l'Eglise Romaine*, p. 46.

29 *Schreiben, das Johann Jakob Rüegg von Luzern aus, gleich nach seiner Bekehrung zum Römischcatholischen Glauben*, reprinted in Räss, *Die Convertiten*, vol. 8, pp. 97–114, p. 109: 'Vorzuglich aber muss ich seiner höchst gefährlichen Ruckfehr nach Zürich erwähnen, das er später verlassen, um sich Lucern zu begeben, wo er als treuer Sohn im Schoos der Catholischen Kirche mir seine Manuscripte und Druckschriften zurückliess, welche nebst andern Einwirfungen und Ueberzeugungsmitteln nicht wenig zur Beschleunigung meines offentlichen Bekenntnisses der Wahrheit begetragen haben'.

30 Räss, *Die Convertiten*, p. 97; the letter is dated May 10, 1676.

31 On the Proselytenkammer in Bern, see M. Kung, *Die Bernische Asyl- und Fluchtlingspolitik am Ende des 17 Jahrhunderts* (Geneva: Droz, 1993); for Zurich, Bock, *Konversionen*, pp. 103–5; for Geneva, G. Moeckli, 'La Chambre des Proselytes de Geneve (1708–1798)', *Bulletin de la societé d'histoire e d'archeologie de Geneve* X (1955), pp. 335–71.

5 A Mercenary Faith

Conversions of Northern Soldiers, 1600–1750

In 1633, the Congregation of Propaganda Fide received a letter from a Flemish missionary who was living in the countryside outside of Cremona with a regiment of soldiers in the service of the Spanish crown, a polyglot and international group that included French, Spanish, Flemish, and German recruits as well as a few Italians. On the whole, the group was not unusual for the hybrid military companies hired by governments of the Italian states during the period. And it was also typical that the group included more than a few men who did not identify themselves as Catholics, which was the reason for the missionary's presence in such a remote and sparsely inhabited location. As he boasted in the letter, 'with the help of the lord I have already reduced eight of them to the Holy faith', and afterwards he brought them to the nearby city, where the inquisitor had heard their confessions and they had been received by the bishop. He requested permission to become chaplain to the soldiers, 'in the hope that by following the aforesaid regiment wherever it will go, many others will join the Holy Church'.[1]

This letter is one of many pieces of evidence of one of the largest grey zones within an apparently homogeneous Catholic society: the presence of foreign troops, in most cases mercenaries in the service of the Italian states, who belonged to the Protestant churches. The Italian states, especially the small republics and principalities that spanned Northern Italy, had long depended on mercenaries, and this habit proved difficult to break in a period when their need for defence far outstripped their ability to levy troops from among their own subjects. At the same time, the strategic importance of fortified cities such as Milan and Alessandria, which guarded access to and from Italy through the Alps, remained central for the Spanish and later Austrian overlords of Lombardy, and they continued to invest resources and manpower in order to maintain large garrisons in these locations.

In the seventeenth century, which Geoffrey Parker has called 'the century of

the soldier', these patterns only intensified as a spate of local conflicts, including the War of Mantuan Succession in 1628–1631 and the Castro War in 1645, placed increasing pressure on the finances and military resources of most of the principalities of Northern Italy, as well as Tuscany and the Papal States.[2] At the same time, the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War made the fortified cities and supply routes that extended from Italy through the Alps even more vital for the armies of the Spanish crown, who continued to consider their defence and maintenance a central objective. The Spanish Road through the Alps, which was used to transfer troops between the Iberian Peninsula, the Low Countries, and Germany, was heavily used between the end of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century; during the Valtelline revolt that began in 1620, it became itself an object of conflict between Spain and France and their respective local clienteles.[3]

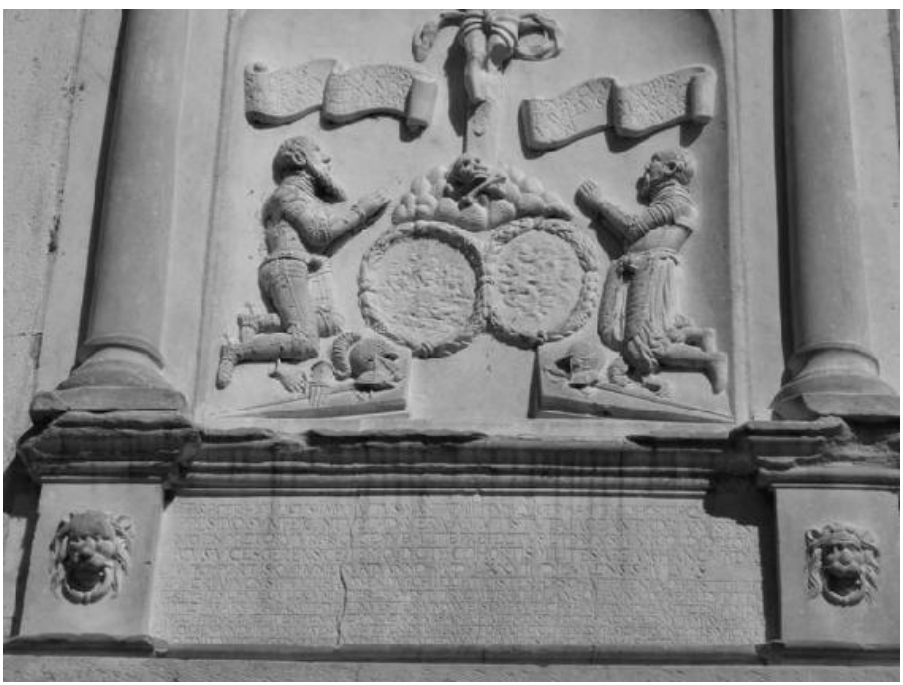

Figure 5.1 1577 funerary monument for Adrian von Sittighauss and Paul Mangolt von Colmar, two German mercenary captains in the service of the Republic of Genoa, Sarzana, church of San Francesco (author photo)

Most of the Italian states attempted to hire exclusively Catholic soldiers to serve in their regiments and within their territories, but few succeeded in making good on this promise.[4] An entire regiment of *oltramontani*, mostly German and Scandinavian converts who had spent time in the Ospizio dei Convertendi, were employed to stand guard at the Piazza di Pietra in Rome.[5] And when the grand duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III de' Medici, offered a position

to a colonel Schlem from Lower Saxony in 1682 at a salary of 700 talers per annum, he instructed his secretary to verify not only that he was 'perfectly knowledgeable in military affairs' but that he was an orthodox Catholic as well.[6] In Genoa, the city government insisted that the members of the German militia stationed in the city be observant Catholics who regularly attended mass, confessed, and took communion, and in 1651, the Republic expelled a captain of the guard for professing 'the abominable sect of Calvin'.[7] Nevertheless, these attempts to enforce confessional uniformity were for the most part few and far between. Recruitment was almost never directly managed by the governments of the states where the mercenaries were destined to serve, and the military entrepreneurs—colonels and mercenary captains—responsible for this task often had little opportunity or interest in looking closely into the religious beliefs or habits of their new hires; often working in intense competition with one another, they inevitably allowed pragmatism and basic logistics to prevail over any concerns about religious identity, and the companies that arrived in the peninsula were often like the one encountered by the Flemish missionary, a mixture of recruits of different nationalities, religious backgrounds, and languages.[8]

Just as merchants from Northern Europe performed an essential role within the economy of the Italian states and were protected even in the territories of the papacy, foreign soldiers were a precious and indispensable resource for their defence.[9] Despite attempts to limit the presence of heretics in their ranks, most observers recognized the impossibility of ever accomplishing this goal in reality; like the merchants and travellers who flocked to Italy in large numbers, soldiers were usually left alone. In 1627, the inquisitor of Milan, apparently overwhelmed by the sheer number of *oltramontani*, both Protestant and Catholic, who passed through his jurisdiction, remarked in a letter to Rome that he did not generally prosecute soldiers 'who are tolerated because of the wars', just like the merchants in the city and state who were protected by long-standing commercial treaties which the church was forced to respect, however much it disapproved of them. Members of these two categories only placed themselves at risk when they created 'scandals' or 'disseminated doctrine'.[10]

Thus soldiers arriving from Germany, France, and the Low Countries were granted a margin of protection from scrutiny of their religious identities; while many lived long periods in Italy without ever being detected, those who attracted the attention of local religious authorities were often subjected to arrest and trial. Foreign mercenaries were often ignorant of the highly charged religious and political issues that surrounded their presence in Italy, lacked protection or points of reference in local society, and were prone to violence. And as a consequence, they were easily led into confrontations with the Catholic Church on occasions when they violated the vague but ever-present

distinction between private belief and scandalous outward behaviour, whether by openly promoting heretical doctrines or indulging in the many vices for which soldiers were notorious: prostitution, gambling, and petty crime.[11] Soldiers were on the radar of the Inquisition and the institutes of conversion, and both adopted a number of strategies to intercept them and persuade them to convert.

The stories that emerge from the hundreds of depositions given by soldiers before inquisitors and other ecclesiastical officials allow us access to the biographical details and motivations that underlay conversions among members of this group of outsiders. Sometimes it served as a means of escape from judicial and military authorities, from one's enemies, or from one's own family and the obligations that it imposed. Alternatively, it could be undertaken as part of a strategy of social integration and professional advancement that brought the convert more resolutely into the Catholic world, including opportunities to enter the service of an Italian government or practice a trade in an Italian city. Sometimes converts were driven by a desire to marry a Catholic, and in a relatively small number of cases, their religious sensibilities alone led them to the Catholic Church. In these respects, at least, the conversions of military men were analogous to those of the many other men and women who converted during the period.

However, there are other aspects of these narratives which derive very specifically from the context of military life and the heavy demands that it placed on those who participated in it. In the biographies of soldier-converts, it is difficult to separate the social marginality of soldiers, their propensity for violence, and their antagonism towards civilians from their decision to change faiths, illustrating once again the ways in which the motivations for changes in religious identity were viewed very differently at different levels of the social scale.[12] Between the humiliations and twists of fate that were common to military life, conversion frequently appeared as the best option for men who were isolated and vulnerable in a foreign country. And as a consequence, the clergy who encountered them were particularly sensitive to soldiers' ambiguous identities and anxious to guarantee their lasting adherence to their new faith. Even soldiers whose motivations appeared sincere usually came from periods of mobility and were often alienated from the ethical and social structures of civilian society in ways that made their pasts difficult to evaluate and their future behaviour difficult to predict. As Wietse de Boer has pointed out in a criticism of analogies between confessionalization and the military revolution, 'the era of the religious wars was more often characterized by indiscipline than its opposite'.[13]

* * *

The records of the inquisitorial tribunals in Italy record sporadic abjurations of soldiers throughout this period that confirm both their presence across Italian territory and the interest of ecclesiastical authorities in investigating their religious habits. Fifty-two of the 119 abjurations of Protestants that took place before the tribunal of the Holy Office in Florence between 1610 and 1768 were made by soldiers; in Modena, the number began lower, at only fourteen in the seventeenth century, and climbed to ninety-one in the years between 1700 and 1784.[14] In general, the phenomenon is much more visible outside of major urban centres, in the remote localities where troops were stationed and where vicars of the Inquisition were present from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The tribunal of Aquileia in Friuli oversaw the reconciliation of approximately two hundred soldiers stationed at the fortress of Palmanova in the period between 1595 and 1669.[15] In another Venetian outpost, Crema, which lay on the border with the Duchy of Milan, thirty-eight soldiers were tried in the brief period between 1622 and 1630.[16]

The vicar of the Holy Office stationed at the Genoese fortress of Sarzana on the Ligurian coast appears to have been almost exclusively occupied with hearing the confessions of soldiers and converting them to Catholicism. Fra Ambrogio Lazzotti interrogated twenty-four soldiers who asked to abjure either Lutheranism or Calvinism between 1676 and 1693 and recorded their testimony in brief dossiers that are seldom longer than a couple of pages each. Most of the men came from Switzerland and predominantly from Graubünden, the Catholic canton bordering Italy that contained a large Protestant minority; a small number came from further away, including Strasbourg, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Frankfurt. Almost all were unable to speak Italian, and they spoke through interpreters, usually other soldiers, who provided the inquisitor with the names of the regiment they served in and its commanding officer, and basic biographies that included their place of origin and their parents' religious backgrounds. When asked why they wanted to become Catholics, all responded, prompted by the interpreter or inquisitor, 'because I recognized that until now I was on the wrong path, and in order to save my soul'.[17]

Milan was perhaps the most heavily fortified and strategically important city in Italy during the early modern period, and though the entire local archive of the Inquisition has been lost, some traces of its activity have survived elsewhere; what little remains suggests that the civil and religious authorities there began to open proceedings against Calvinist and Lutheran soldiers on a limited scale at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[18] In 1610, Federico Borromeo asked his vicar, Antonio Seneca, to obtain a license from Rome 'to absolve the heretic soldiers who can be found in this diocese and who come to the holy faith', and during the same year he issued

instructions warning the clergy of his diocese of the threats to both public order and orthodox doctrine that soldiers brought with them when they arrived in the city.[19] There remain, however, very few traces of proceedings during this period: In one particularly well-documented case, four Swiss soldiers were arrested and put on trial after allegedly speaking ill of the Catholic Church in a tavern outside of Bergamo in 1619. Two of the men agreed to abjure and become Catholics, while the others, both of higher social standing, refused. After a lengthy negotiation that involved the Spanish governor, the Spanish ambassador to the Swiss confederation, and Paul V, the Holy Office agreed to let them go free, arguing that the accusations against them could not be conclusively demonstrated and that a condemnation would have threatened to upset relations between the Protestant Cantons and the Duchy of Milan.[20]

Later, in the mid-eighteenth century, the officials of the Ospizio dei Catecumeni in Milan began to interrogate converts who approached the institute and requested subsidies and instruction in the Catholic faith; for this period, the records of the institute provide a partial substitute for those of the Holy Office.[21] The testimony they contain affords a rare glimpse inside a hybridized Protestant and Catholic German-speaking enclave in the midst of one of Europe's most militant Catholic cities. Especially after 1668, when a permanent regiment of German troops was stationed in the city for the first time, Milan played host to an entire subculture of military men, their wives and families, and the interpreters, spies, and salesmen who followed the army and depended on it for their livelihood.[22] This expatriate group found a city that was largely accustomed to their presence and tolerant of their religious difference, so long as it was contained to private prayer and worship and did not pose a threat to the Catholic majority.

In most cases, the best source of information about military men were other soldiers, who often provided the names of their as-yet-unconverted comrades when placed under questioning. In Sarzana in 1676, Lucio di Capol, a Swiss soldier in the company of Solomon Sprecher, denounced four of his companions to Lazzotti, who recorded all of their abjurations within a couple of months after di Capol's conversion. Three of them were members of the same company who were questioned and abjured immediately after di Capol, while the fourth, Florio Sprecher, had to be brought from another fortress near La Spezia. All of the men, according to a formulaic transcript that differed very little from one to the next, stated that they had voluntarily come before the vicar and abjured their former beliefs, while professing their newfound faith in the Catholic Church and recognizing the supreme authority of the reigning pontiff, Innocent XI; all of their testimony was translated for the vicar by Lucio di Capol, who co-signed his comrades' depositions. And despite the fact

that they had apparently decided to abjure only after di Capol had given their names to the vicar, none of the men received anything more than salutary penances as punishment for their heresy.[23] A number of similar group conversions took place in Palmanova, both among the companies of German troops stationed in the fortress and among a smaller number of Turkish troops who had been impressed into or volunteered for the Venetian military.[24]

Most of these trials took the form of self-accusations (the *spontanea comparitio*) without penalty and were usually undertaken by individuals who had decided of their own will to convert and only approached the Holy Office once they had made the decision. One of the converts in Crema, a Scottish standard-bearer named 'Johann Vood', told inquisitors that he had decided to approach them after talking with a Catholic and fellow Scot, who had 'declared many passages of the Christian and Catholic religion'. Another claimed that he had decided to convert after listening to sermons in the cathedral.[25] But there were also other instances in which inquisitors opened trials ex officio on the basis of denunciations made by third parties or clues gathered in the course of their work. In Crema, a Belgian missionary accused a Calvinist soldier of attempting to convert other soldiers to his church and claimed that he had spoken of 'papists' to a soldier who lay injured in a local hospital. In other cases, investigations into the ordinary offences—violence, gambling, and blasphemy were the most common—committed by soldiers gave rise to questions about their religious beliefs and confessional identity.[26] In Palmanova, the twenty-one-year-old son of the local butcher, feeling guilty about the 'revelry' he had indulged in with three Lutheran soldiers who had been stationed at the fortress, revealed their names to the Holy Office.[27] And when brought before the courts of the Inquisition, not all Protestant soldiers demonstrated the willingness to convert immediately: On at least one occasion, in Genoa in 1609, a German soldier who was condemned as an impenitent heretic (meaning that he openly admitted to and refused to renounce his beliefs) was sentenced to death and executed.[28]

* * *

These documents possess many of the limitations familiar to historians who work with the records of early modern judicial systems. Their contents were dictated by soldiers whose credibility was often heavily compromised, and they frequently contain references to events and individuals of which it was well beyond the capacity of their judges to verify. Furthermore, testimony was often written down in a different form than it was received: translated when the speaker did not know Italian, sometimes rewritten in the third person or with stock phrases that inquisitors used to fill holes in the narrative or

embellish the simple terms in which the converts expressed themselves. Nevertheless, the depositions of soldiers still contain valid evidence about the ways in which soldiers' itinerant lives and exposure to other religious communities were capable of loosening the tightly constructed confessional identities they had inherited from their families and circle of relations in their places of origin. They also suggest the ways in which the ordinary pitfalls of military life, from illness, injury, and psychological harm to impressment, disbandment, and imprisonment influenced the soldiers, shaking old relationships and convictions and pushing them towards new religious beliefs and practices. And last but not least, they indicate, from yet another vantage point, the complicated interrelationships and mutual dependencies which developed between members of different confessional groups, often outside of the view of religious authorities and beyond their control, both in Italy and beyond its borders.

Many of the converts emphasized the importance of new acquaintances and the way that travel and exposure to new places and ideas had the effect of slowly eroding their earlier convictions. Geremia Wanner, who was stationed in Palmanova in 1615, stated that he had been born to a family that belonged to the Lutheran church in Vienna and lived according to its dictates until he joined a regiment. Once he began to travel, he had the opportunity to hear sermons from preachers of many different churches, and the experience left him 'ambiguous regarding what [he] believed'. Finally, when he arrived in Palmanova, a local Capuchin, Pasquale da Venezia, met with Wanner on many occasions and 'made [him] aware of the errors in which [he] had lived until now'.[29] Over half a century later, Elias Righer attributed his own gradual transformation to his departure from his native Silesia and his arrival in the Italian peninsula:

> I held and believed in all of the heresies until two years ago, when I went to Rome and to the Santa Casa di Loreto, and having seen in many churches the ceremonies that the Catholics perform in their cult and having considered the union and concord that they express regarding the dogmas of the holy faith, I became very much inclined toward the Holy Catholic faith and it seemed to me to be in a bad state if I were to remain in the aforementioned sect of Luther …[30]

For the Dutch soldier Francesco de Brevi, the loosening of the bonds of family and community were compounded by his encounters with Catholics among his comrades in arms:

> Now on these occasions, when talking and being in company with many Catholic soldiers and often reasoning of falsity of the Calvinists and the truth of the Roman Catholic faith, though at the beginning I did not want to assent to these reasonings, in the end it pleased God that because of their persuasions and those of some Capuchin fathers … I resolved to become a good and true Catholic …[31]

In short, the disruption of one's earlier network of social relations, exposure to

new places and new ways of life, and life in the polyglot and religiously promiscuous ranks of the armies of Europe were all factors that allowed these men to gradually or suddenly exchange their old points of reference for new ones. One soldier, Jean Olivier, a Calvinist from Montpellier, gave a lengthy retelling of the events that led to his abjuration before the inquisitor in Palmanova in 1616. It began with his departure from France for the Alps in a regiment under the command of another Calvinist, where he fought for a year for the duke of Savoy. After being discharged, he accepted the invitation from another soldier from Montpellier, Blaise de Roche, and headed towards Milan. De Roche, a Catholic, introduced him to the cult of Carlo Borromeo in Milan and 'attempted to make [him] a Catholic'.[32] The two men left Milan for Rome, where Olivier found work as a weaver near the Pantheon. When in Rome, Olivier began to dissimulate as a Catholic externally and attend mass, but his employer threw him out when Olivier revealed that he was a heretic, even though he declared that he wanted to convert. Once again left to his own devices, he found another shop where the owner offered him work and sent him to the Holy Office to abjure. However, just as he had begun catechism under the guidance of a Jesuit priest, Olivier changed his mind and fled the city 'by the temptation of the devil and persuaded by two other Frenchmen', Calvinists who like him came from Languedoc. His next stop was Florence, where he re-entered military service under the command of a local captain and continued to pretend to be a Catholic without ever confessing to or abjuring his past beliefs. His company was hired by the Republic of Venice, and Olivier was sent to Palmanova, where he fell ill. After rethinking his past mistakes and conversing with several missionaries, he decided to present himself to the inquisitor and complete the abjuration that he had abandoned many months previously.[33]

Olivier described himself as having been on the cusp of conversion several times during a long and eventful journey before being dragged back into sin and heresy by various misfortunes. When it finally arrived, redemption came in the form of an illness, a calamity which forced him to reckon with the possibility of his imminent death and into the care of a religious institution.[34] A dramatic change of mind in the face of death was a feature of other accounts as well; as one brief note in the records of the Milan ospizio recorded, a soldier struggling to survive was often more easily compelled to embrace the church:

> Johann Christoph Harteg, native of Wittenberg, an invalid soldier of the Sprecher Regiment, who was missing an arm, of the Lutheran sect, arrived in Milan on his way to the hospital in Pest in Hungary, and fell ill and was admitted to the hospital of this city. His condition worsened and he was going to die, and having been assisted by Father Canute Scope, a Franciscan, he privately abjured heresy to this same father, and then, after he recovered from his illness, abjured according to the ordinary procedure on September 14th, 1747 at la Rosa (i.e. before the Holy Office).[35]

The note gives no indication whether Harteg, like Olivier before him, had entertained doubts about his religious beliefs before his illness or if his conversion was instead the result of a dramatic, deathbed realization at the persuasion of a confessor who had been sent for that purpose. After his second abjuration, he left Milan and resumed travelling towards Hungary.[36]

Though soldiers' freedom from local ties and vulnerability in a foreign society often created the ideal conditions for conversion, the authorities who encountered them also recognized that there was another side to their anarchic and rootless existences, a mercenary tendency to deceive, to escape, and to make agreements when necessary only to break them when it became possible to do so. The administrators of the Ospizio in Milan were particularly concerned to avoid wasting the institute's precious resources on unreliable or insincere converts, and they tended to view soldiers as belonging to this category. Their shadowy pasts often made it difficult to understand whether they were telling the truth about themselves or simply trying to exploit the institute for money through false or repeated conversions. A good example is the Swiss soldier Leopold Faver, who abjured before the inquisitor in 1747. When he appealed to the hospice for assistance, the officials there immediately noticed that he was disfigured, 'marked on his forehead and with his ears and nose cut', wounds which Faver claimed that he had received as a penalty for desertion. After hearing his story, the officials of the ospizio gave voice to their doubts—the scars on his face suggested that he had been punished for crimes far worse than desertion—but they nevertheless provided him with a heavy coat, a used shirt, a hat, stockings, and a pair of shoes and sent him to Lugano, 'a town of abundance for the poor', where they hoped he would be able to find employment as a baker. Their suspicions deepened when Faver returned a few months later, without the clothes that he had been given, to ask for another handout. When pressed, he at first denied that he had ever received any clothes from the institute but eventually admitted that he had sold them for food in a moment of desperation. He was granted a new certificate of abjuration but nothing more.[37]

If Faver tested the credulity of his interrogators, Andre le Roy, 'a man of ordinary height, of a rather brown coloration, with dark eyes and black hair' who requested instruction in the Catholic faith in 1749, presented a narrative that they found completely preposterous, full of 'contradictions and circumstances that appear entirely improbable'.[38] He claimed that he had abandoned the army of the duke of Savoy in Turin in order to convert to Catholicism but had been turned away from the local ospizio because he was not German. And though he attempted to corroborate his claims with the testimony of two 'pilgrims' who had accompanied him to Milan, their version of the story ended up contradicting his own. The theologian of the curia

demanded that he present proof of his confessional identity and employment in a tailor's shop in Turin before allowing him to convert. Le Roy assented but left Milan for Turin and did not return. The same year another French soldier, Antoine Pol, a self-described Calvinist from Arles, was denied any assistance from the collegio when he proved unable to explain 'the sacred mystery of the Trinity' or any of the other concepts held in common by all Christian churches.[39]

Faver, le Roy, and Pol appeared in varying degrees to fit the model of the duplicitous *furfante*, a trickster who used dissimulation and outright deception as ways to obtain benefits or simply survive in a hostile society.[40] It was a strategy that had been long practiced by converts who recognized the numerous blind spots of civil and religious authorities, who were often unaccustomed to verifying the stories of travellers from far away countries and usually lacked the means to do so. Professional converts, who faked conversions to religions to which they already belonged or repeated the ceremonies of baptism or abjuration in different localities, appear continually in the records of inquisitorial courts and other tribunals throughout the early modern period, despite the heavy penalties they faced if they were caught.[41] In the case of soldiers, whose lives were frequently interrupted by repeated travel over long distances and obscured by episodes of violence or imprisonment, the challenges to verifying the information provided in a self-description or autobiography were even greater, and the scepticism of the officials of the curia is not surprising. Though the administrators of the ospizio began to request *recapiti* (documents from foreign authorities that could support converts' claims and certify their religious identities and provenance) in 1749, this rarely resolved the doubts raised by the ambiguous personages who came asking for alms.[42] In 1772, the thirty-four-year-old Jean-Baptiste Verlot, a citizen of Geneva and veteran of the Spanish and Prussian armies, and his family were turned away by an official who considered their motives 'insufficient' and noted that they lacked the necessary *recapiti*.[43]

Nevertheless, even the scepticism of the officials of the hospice did not always preclude their acceptance of a convert with highly dubious credentials. In 1747, the ospizio gave refuge to Johann Baptista Gartener, a Prussian Anabaptist who had killed one soldier and wounded another in Genoa after they had attempted to impress him into serving in their regiment. After fleeing to Besozzo, a small town in Lombardy, he approached a local priest who spoke German and confessed both his crimes and his desire to convert. The priest relayed Gartener's story to the ospizio and sent him to Milan, where he was given shelter and money and placed under the care of the confessor Florian Donath, who described him as 'good-natured' and began to prepare him for baptism after a period of instruction. However, the friar's confidence proved to

be misplaced when, not long after his arrival in Milan, Gartener returned to his rented room in a drunken stupor, gathered his possessions, and fled the city, leaving behind the two German catechisms that Donath had given him.[44]

* * *

Yet for all of the soldiers whose conversions were momentary events in the course of fundamentally itinerant and unstable lives, there were others who considered it a means of removing themselves from the dangers and hardships of military life and into a more solid position in a new society, a typology of convert that was inevitably viewed more favourably by ecclesiastical authorities. Cases like those of Faver and Gartener serve as reminders that many of the men serving in the armies of Europe during the period were doing so against their will and that conversion offered one of few means of escape available. They were not the only deserters to seek comprehension and support from Catholic authorities who always placed a high value on a new convert. Abraham Rivallier was born in exile to Huguenots who had taken refuge in Switzerland following the expulsion of 1685, and he returned to France sometime after the beginning of the eighteenth century. Living in Lyon, not far from the epicentre of a Protestant revolt against Louis XV, he was swept up in the repression that followed, and in order to avoid impressment into the royal militia, he fled to Italy and converted to Catholicism in Turin in 1745. With the assistance of Cardinal Pozzobonelli, the archbishop of Milan, he was granted a temporary stipend of 10 lire per month and a position as a teacher of grammar and arithmetic in a small town in Lombardy.[45] It was Rivallier's ironic fate to be chased out of France because of his religious identity, only to convert to the faith of the majority in Italy.

For those who arrived in Milan as soldiers, one of the most common ways to abandon military life was to find a Catholic wife and convert in order to marry her. Officers such as Johann Pach, a Swiss corporal in the Sprecher regiment, sought both religious instruction and support for himself and his family when he became 'illuminated by God to the charity of the Holy Catholic faith', resigned his military commission in Milan, and 'embraced it through the pious assistance and instruction that he received from father Florian penitentiary of this cathedral'. Immediately after abjuring at La Rosa, Pach married the Catholic widow of an officer in his regiment. Like Pach, his new wife came from the canton of Graubünden, and it is probable that their decision to marry preceded his conversion rather than the other way around. Shortly after the ceremony, the new couple appealed to the officials of the catecumeni for support, though they hoped to begin to earn a living on their own.[46] A similar story involved Simon Geeni, 'a man of average height, slender build, brown

hair, and black eyes' who arrived from Switzerland in 1750. He had deserted from the Savoyard army as a young man and returned to his home near Chur, married a Catholic woman from Austria and set out for Italy with the hope of joining an Austrian regiment in Lombardy. But when he arrived in Milan, he found that the regiment had been disbanded. Without prospects of employment, he recounted to the officials of the ospizio that his wife had explained to him that he could not save his soul unless he converted and told him to seek instruction in the faith. Geeni explained that he sought not only instruction but 'at the same time means of assistance' and despite their scepticism regarding certain parts of his account, the officials of the ospizio granted him 22 lire and 17 soldi.[47]

It was also possible for Italian Catholic soldiers to appeal to the ospizio on behalf of their Lutheran and Calvinist wives, and several veterans of Prussian and Austrian regiments did so. Antonio Riboldi, a native of Milan, had left Italy as an adolescent drummer in the Austrian military and was taken prisoner and impressed into the Prussian army in 1758. When stationed in Konigsberg, he met and married a young widow, Maria Magdalena Wolleckin, who gave birth to two daughters who like her were baptized in the Lutheran church. Riboldi made the decision to return to Italy after he was warned by his confessor that the souls of the members of his family were in danger as long as they remained heretics, and in order to do so, he acquired a passport under a false name and escaped from Germany in 1773. Upon arriving in Milan, all three women abjured the Lutheran church and became Catholics, and the entire family received frequent donations of money and clothing from the ospizio over the following four years. The couple portrayed Maria Magdalena's flight to Milan and conversion as a heroic recognition of the true faith, but it also served as expedient to escape from the unforgiving authority of the Prussian monarchy and a way for Riboldi to leave the ranks of an army that he had never wanted to join.[48] In a similar case, Carlo Rivolta, another native Lombard, arrived in Milan with his Saxon wife, Maria Caterina, en route to the sanctuary of Loreto, where she abjured Calvinism and became a Catholic.[49]

In all of these instances, the ospizio played the role of a mediator that offered converts not only religious education and spiritual betterment, but an honourable means to remove themselves from an onerous and undesirable line of work. Desertion may have been dishonourable, but abandoning one faith for another or favouring the conversion of a heretic was a choice so profoundly beneficial that it could justify, if not entirely remove, the shame of abandoning ranks. It was also a relatively simple move for a single soldier whose social network was confined to his comrades in arms. It became more complicated only in a handful of cases when relatives of soldiers and military staff attempted to convert against the will of the rest of the family. Agnesa Enderle,

who came to Milan from the Graubünden, had already suffered a great deal by the time she arrived in the city. She had been orphaned and robbed by soldiers at a young age, only to be abandoned by her husband, an Italian soldier who left her when she refused to convert. She then wandered alone through Lombardy before arriving in Milan, where 'reduced in the most extreme misery', she finally decided to abjure. She told the officials of the ospizio that her uncle was a captain of a Swiss regiment stationed in the fortress and that he might be willing to help, but she was reluctant to contact him because he was a Calvinist and did not know that she had become a Catholic.[50]

The tensions that lay underneath the surface in the case of Angesa Enderle were also present in another well-documented case that occurred a few years earlier. Johann Georg Meijer, a nineteen-year-old Lutheran from a village in Saxony, had travelled to Italy with his sister and brother-in-law, a quartermaster in the Austrian army, and took up residence with the Lobkowitz regiment in Melegnano, a sleepy town a short distance from the city. Perhaps bored by his surroundings, and probably seeking a way to remove himself from the control of his sister and her husband, he went before the local vicar of the Holy Office, Giacomo Maria Longhi, and explained that he wanted to become a Catholic. Longhi, recognizing Meijer's vulnerable position in the face of the opposition of his sister and her husband, had him secluded in the palace of the Marchesa di Melegnano and recruited a Servite friar to educate him in the rudiments of the faith; he also appealed to the ospizio in Milan for money for the boy's education and upkeep. Once enough time had passed, he organized a ceremony for Meijer's abjuration, his definitive passage into the Catholic fold, which he insisted be held publicly in the presence of the local nobility and the members of the regiment, convinced that the festivities 'will serve for the edification of the soldiers and officials who find themselves there and are for the most part heretics'.[51]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, when most of these narratives were recorded, the period of intense religious warfare that ended with the Thirty Years' War was long past and forms of religious tolerance had spread even into the most conservative regimes in Europe. Italian society was much less alarmed by the presence of non-Catholics in its midst, and the local courts of the Inquisition were being slowly phased out of existence: None of the soldiers who came before the Holy Office in Milan in the 1740s and 1750s risked facing the severe penalties that had been occasionally given out in the previous century. And the number of actual converts, as can be seen from the statistics cited earlier, remained relatively small. Soldier-converts, like the other social types outlined in this book, were normal exceptions, whose life experiences were shared by many others but whose decision to abandon the faith of their fathers was decidedly unusual.

Even so, these narratives reveal how strong the perception of religious difference remained among members of the Catholic majority and the religious minorities living in Italy and the durability of the social practices that built up around it. The soldiers who converted in Milan may have been driven by a range of motivations, yet all of them recognized that membership in the church was the key to entry into Italian society. The way they carefully put together stories of past lives built on half-truths and blatant lies is itself a demonstration of how well they had learned this basic fact. And the inquisitors and officials of the insititutes of conversion who encountered them were no less determined to use whatever means they possessed to comprehend their 'true' intentions. More than two hundred years after the foundation of the Casa dei Catecumeni in Rome, the game of appearances and dissimulation, of sincerity and deceit, continued with the same intensity as before, marking out the shadowy border between the Catholic world and its rivals.

Notes

1 ASPF, SOCG 393, f. 126, undated letter sent to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide by the Carmelite friar Robert Gersmeuter; three years earlier, a similar request came from the Capuchin fra Giacomo da Baviera, who was attached to a German regiment in Concordia, near Ferrara, ASPF, SOCG 390, f. 59.

2 G. Parker, 'The Soldier' in R. Villari (ed.), *Baroque Personae*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 32; see also C. Donati and B. R. Kroener (eds), *Militari e società civile nell'Europa dell'età moderna (secoli XVI–XVIII)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2007).

3 G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

4 See for example, the plans to hire a regiment of five hundred Swiss troops from only the Catholic cantons in Florence, ASF, Mediceo del Principato 2176, ff.nn.; this concern was not unique to Italy, it was shared by Spanish military officials in the period: O. Recio Morales, 'La gente de naciones en los esercitos de los Austrias hispanos: servicio, confianza, y correspondencia', in E. Garcia Hernan and D. Maffi (eds), *Guerra y sociedad en la monarquia hispanica: politica, estrategia, y cultura* (Madrid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 651–81, 669.

5 Raunio, *Conversioni al cattolicesimo*, p. 133; the piazza was the location of the customs house for goods arriving in the city by land.

6 ASF, Mediceo del Principato 4287, letters to Apollonio Bassetti recommending Schlem and a copy of his commission, in German and Italian, dated Florence, December 3, 1682; ASF, Melani 59, letter from ducal secretary Apollonio Bassetti to Domenico Melani, dated July 31, 1683.

7 P. Fontana, 'Protestanti e Inquisitori a Genova tra i secoli XVI–XVIII. Il Problema della "Militia Germanica"', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 80 (1996), pp. 211–20.

8 F. Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and His Work Force: A Study in European Economic and Social History* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1964), pp. 271–87; D. Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

9 Following the cessation of hostilities between England and Spain in 1604 and the Dutch Republic and Spain in 1609, both the Papacy and the Kingdom of Naples made trade agreements with both Protestant powers, permitting their merchant companies to operate with guarantees against prosecution and confiscation; see H. G. Koenigsberger, 'English Merchants in Naples and Sicily in the Seventeenth Century', *The English Historical Review*, 62 (1947), pp. 304–26, and G. Coniglio, *Il Viceregno di Napoli nel XVII secolo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955), pp. 111–24.

10 Letter from Giovan Michele Pio to the Congregation of the Holy Office, quoted in Fosi, *Convertire lo straniero*, pp. 147–8, cited above, Chapter 4: 'Non mi molestano i confederati mercanti, perche so la concessione apostolica, non la soldatesca che è tollerata per le guerre, purche si contenghi dai scandali et dal seminare dottrina'. On the ban on travel by heretics into Italy and the numerous abrogations of it, see P. Simoncelli, 'Clemente VIII e alcuni provvedimenti del Sant'Uffizio (De Italis habitantibus in partibus haereticorum)', *Critica Storica*, XIII (1976), pp. 129–72, and P. Schmidt, 'L'inquisizione e gli stranieri', in *L'inqusizione e gli storici. Un cantiere aperto* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2000), pp. 365–72.

11 On the vices of foreign soldiers and the Inquisition, see the numerous trials for magic and blasphemy in G. Trenti (ed.), *I processi dell'Inquisizione di Modena, 1489–1784* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 2003) and the summary of the history of the tribunal Holy Office in Alessandria by G. M. Panizza in *DSI*, vol. 1, pp. 35–6.

12 On the autobiographies of soldiers in the Empire and their value for a social history of the military, see H. T. Graf, 'Ruolo e funzione delle testimonianze autobiografiche per la storia militare', in Donati and Kroener (eds), *Militari e società civile*, pp. 281–311.

13 W. de Boer, 'Soldati in terra straniera. La fede tra Inquisizione e ragion di stato', *Studia Borromaica*, 23 (2009), pp. 403–27, 404. I have translated the quote.

14Nemec, *Documenti d'archivio per la storia delle conversioni*, p. 17; *I processi dell'Inquisizione di Modena*, pp. 82, 138–39, 141, 151, 153, 163, 170–77, 185, 189–93, 196–7, 200–8, 210–13, 215, 217, 219, 223–4, 226–9, 233. I only counted the abjurations of Protestants explicitly identified as soldiers or officers. The abjurations are from one of the most complete series of trials in Italy, numbering a total of 6,070 cases.

15G. Minchella (ed.), *'Porre un soldato alla inquisitione'. I processi del Sant'Ufficio nella fortezza di Palmanova, 1595–1669* (Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2009), L, XCIV–XCVI. Of the Protestant members of the garrison stationed in the fortress, Minchella writes that 'solo un numero esiguo di questi soldati si presentarono all'Inquisizione per abbandonare l'eresia e passare al cattolicesimo'.

16S. Peyronel, 'Frontiere religiose e soldati in antico regime: il caso di Crema nel seicento', in C. Donati (ed.), *Alle frontiere della Lombardia: politica, guerra, e religione nell'età moderna* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006), pp. 19–20.

17AVL, filza miscellanea 5, ff. 294, 316, 321, 325–6, 332, 343, 359, 412, 558, 600; filza miscellanea 6, ff. 31, 36, 39, 41–2, 55bis, 133, 194, 235, 243.

18On the history of the inquisition in Milan in the early modern era and the destruction of its records, see the article by M.C. Giannini in *DSI*, vol. 2, pp. 1043–4.

19BAM, ms. G. 230, f. 64v; de Boer, 'Soldati in terra straniera', pp. 419–20.

20De Boer, 'Soldati in terra straniera', pp. 403–14, 421–23.

21During the second half of the eighteenth century, the ospizio in Turin also began to receive soldiers, totalling 173 by the end of the century, Allegra, *Identità in bilico*, pp. 93–5.

22According to D. Maffi, *La cittadella in armi. Esercito, società, e finanza nella Milano di Carlo II, 1660–1700* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2010), pp. 71, 78–9, this year was the first in which a German mercenary regiment was incorporated full time into the Spanish army in Lombardy after years in which they were utilized only in cases of emergency on a temporary basis. At most, these troops represented 30 per cent of the total. In 1690, the Spanish governor made a similar arrangement with regiments from the Swiss cantons of Uri and Luzern.

23AVL, filza miscellanea 5, ff. 316, 321, 326.

24Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, doc. 76, pp. 153–8. The Venetian general Girolamo Civran stood as godfather for thirteen Turkish soldiers who were baptized between 1643 and 1645.

25Peyronel, 'Frontiere Religiose', p. 30.

26Ibid., pp. 35–8.

27Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, doc. 92, 209.

28Fontana, 'Protestanti e Inquisitori', pp. 211–12.

29'Procedura sommaria contro Geremia Wanner', doc. 22 in Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, p. 55.

30'Procedura sommaria contro Elia Righer', doc. 168 in Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, pp. 389–93, 390: 'Io sono nato di padre e madre heretici luterani e da essi allevato e instruto negli errori et heresie della setta di Luttero, l'ho tenute e credute insino quasi due anno sono, che essendo andato a Roma alla santa casa di Loreto e in altre parti della christianità e veduto in diverse chiese le cerimonie ch'usano li catholici intorno la culto della religione e considerando l'unione e concordia d'essi circa i dogmi della santa religione, rimasi molto inclinato alla santa fede catholica e parvemi d'esser in cattivo stato dove pur io fussi per durare nella già detta setta di Luttero …'

31Doc. 23 in Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, pp. 58–62: 'Hora in questa occasione, praticando e facendo camerata con diversi soldati catholici et ragionandosi spesso della falsità dei calvinisti et della verità della fede catholica romana, seben nel principio io non volevo assentire a questi ragionamenti, con tutto ciò finalmente è piaciuto a Iddio che per le persuasioni dei sopradetti soldati et anco d'alcuni padri cappuzzini, dai quali fatto capace della verità, et risolutemi alcuni dubbii che io havevo, mi son risoluto di diventar buono et vero catholico …' de Brevi's abjuration is dated August 27, 1616.

32Minchella, *'Porre un soldato'*, doc. 24, pp. 62–7.

33Ibid., p. 63.

34A 1566 bull issued by Pius V required doctors and hospitals in Italy to refuse care after three days to patients who had not first confessed to a priest. On the background to the promulgation of the bull and its use to prevent Jewish doctors from practicing medicine, see G. Romeo, 'Altre Inquisizioni. Vescovi, Congregazione del Sant'Ufficio e medici ebrei nell'Italia della Controriforma', in P. Scaramella (ed.), *Alberto Tenenti. Scritti in memoria* (Naples: Bibliopolis 2005), pp. 513–35.

35ASDMi, Catecum. 14, ff.nn.: 'Cristofaro Harteg nativo di Vitemberghe, soldato invalido del regimento

sprecher, quale ha tagliato un Braccio, di setta Luterano, pasando per Milano per portarsi all'Ospitale di Pest in Ongheria si è amalato, e però ricoverato nell'Ospitale di questa città si ridusse in ponto di morte, ed essendo asistito dal Padre Cannuto Scope di San Francesco abiurò l'eresia privatamente nelle mani del medesimo Padre inddi riavutosi dalla sua mallatia, habiurò novamente nelle concesse forme detta eresia il giorno 14 settembre 1747 alla Rosa'. La Rosa refers to the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the seat of the Holy Office in Milan.

36For another example of a soldier's conversion following a life-threatening event, in this case a shipwreck, see Fosi, 'Conversion and Autobiography', p. 450.

37ASDMi, Catecum. 14, ff.nn.

38ASDMi, Catecum. 16, ff.nn.: 'd'ambidue si scoprono diverse contradizioni e circostanze, che non hanno del probabile'.

39ASDMi, Catecum. 16, ff.nn.: 'è stato essaminato da monsignor teologho sopra la sua relligione, se sapeva il misterio della santissima trinità, ed a tutti li punti ha sempre risposto non sapere cosa alcuna per essere andato via di casa da piccolo, e non avere mai voluto in nulla [intenersi], da ciò argumentando Mons. Teologho che costui in tutto mentisse ha creduto doversi non admetterlo, e però si è licenziato con dirli, che dii conto della sua persona per mezzo di lettere, o di persone che lo conoschino, che allora si risolverà'.

40The furfante was the subject of a rich vein of satiric and moralizing literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; see for example, P. Camporesi (ed.), *Il libro dei vagabondi, Lo Speculum cerretanorum di Teseo Pini, il vagabondo di Raffaele Frianoro e altri testi di furfanteria* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973).

41In 1583, the papal nuncio in Naples arrested a man who he described as 'falso neofita il quale mutatosi nome et finto d'esser hebreo fatto di prossimo christiano'. After the man had confessed to this 'poltroneria', the nuncio gave him an exemplary punishment intended to prevent others from following his example: he was bound to a donkey and publicly flogged in the streets of the city, and then exiled from the kingdom; ASV, Segreteria di Stato, Napoli, 8, f. 308.

42See the two cases of false conversion, one of the Swedish soldier Jonas Lund, a baptized Catholic who pretended to be a Protestant, in Raunio, *Conversioni al cattolicesimo*, p. 122.

43ASDMi, Catecum. 16, ff.nn.

44Ibid. Gartner's story is similar to the one of Johan Wilhelm Duwall, a Swedish aristocrat and soldier who took refuge in a monastery and converted after attacking one of his comrades; see Raiuno, *Conversioni al cattolicesimo*, p. 102.

45Ibid.

46Ibid.: 'Giovan Martino Pach umilissimo servitor dell'eminenza vostra nativo della terra di splighen nelli grigioni caporale del reggimento sprecher, nato ed educato nella setta di calvino, illuminato da Dio della carità della santa fede cattolicha, si è absentato da detto serviggio militare per avere pìu comodo di farsi istruire nella detta santa fede, quale ha abbracciata mediante la pia assistenza, ed'istruzione avuta dal molto reverendo padre Floriani Penitenziere di questa metropolitana'.

47Ibid.; the disbandment of the regiment referred to by Geeni led to the conversion of at least two other soldiers who had been members of it, Josef Kinsberger and Johan Maier.

48Ibid.

49By contrast, in other cases, conversion served as a way to secure military honours or a better paying commission in the military. Vittorio Amedeo II of Savoy promoted his field marshal Otto von Rehbinder to the chivalric order of the Annunziata in 1713 after he converted to Catholicism from Lutheranism. P. Bianchi, 'Dal mestiere delle armi alla carriera militare. Il caso sabaudo tra XVII e XVIII secolo', in Donati and Kroener (eds), *Militari e società civile*, pp. 364–5.

50ASDMi, Catecum. 14, ff.nn.

51Ibid.

Conclusion

> From its main basis in the Latin world, despite all its limitations, frustrations and imperfections, the Counter-Reformation, by means of all its vigorous activities, ensured the survival into the post-medieval world of a still-persuasive, still-expanding, world form of Christianity under a single centralised control, not broken up into national state-controlled fragments, for all the powers and claims of the Catholic monarchs. This is a matter surely, of the greatest significance for the history of the world, whatever role the modern Catholic Church may be regarded as playing in the philosophies of the schematic world historians-whether Marx or Spengler or Toynbee.
>
> H. Outram Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation.* [1]

When Cardinal Antonio Barberini (1569–1646), the younger brother of Urban VIII who served in the papal penitentiary and the Holy Office, wrote his will, he left a sum of 48 Roman *scudi* to 'the converts to the faith living in Rome'. When it was finally distributed, this money was designated by Propaganda Fide for a series of men of different backgrounds resident in the city: The Swiss ex-pastor Johann Jodocus, who had abandoned the Reformed Church in order to study theology in Milan and Rome; Giovan Battista Jona, a Jewish convert who was collaborating on revisions of the text of the Medici Arabic Bible; Pietro Paolo Paravicini, a former Calvinist from the Valtellina; Giacomo Glizzi; and Giovan Battista de Fabiis, a convert from Islam. All were understood to be in urgent need of assistance; several had families to support in addition to themselves.[2]

The cardinal's will is an act of charity like so many others described earlier in this volume. Its beneficiaries had in common only their status as converts and their protestations of indigence, and the officials who distributed funds to them expected obedience in return, to the church in general and to its specific representatives in Rome, which in this case probably included the deceased cardinal's nephew, Antonio Barberini Junior, the cardinal prefect of Propaganda Fide. Yet despite the fact that these repetitive and opaque exchanges seem to reproduce stereotypes rather than elucidate the complex dynamics of their protagonists' spiritual lives, it should not be overlooked that they represent a pervasive and significant historical phenomenon in their own right. It was nearly impossible for converts to find a place in Counter-Reformation Italy without entering into a relationship with members of the clergy who carefully mediated their interactions with local society, directed their religious education, and, not least, controlled the image of their lives and actions in ways that not even a relatively disinterested observer in the twenty-first century can entirely avoid. Converts were unable to speak of themselves

in almost any forum without the close supervision of a representative of the Catholic majority who could help them to revise their biographies in ways that suited the aims of confessional propaganda. In one way or another, the stories of Alessandro Franceschi, Francesco Maria Orlandini, and Johann Ruegg all included protracted negotiations over the historical record between the convert and the representatives of the church that concluded only when a satisfactory version had been agreed upon. And as we have seen, while the church did not always maintain control over the convert or the narrative as events were unfolding, its institutional memory and the persistence of its apologists often ensured that the official version was the one that prevailed in the end.

This campaign to convert members of religious minorities and subject those who did to further surveillance and discipline had few, if any, precedents in the history of the church. Over the period between 1550 and 1750, the number of circumstances in which conversions were documented multiplied, a direct result of the pervasive institutionalization and bureaucratization of conversion in Italy beginning in the sixteenth century described in chapters 1 and 2. The network of catechumen houses, hospices, and inquisitorial courts only increased in number and sophistication, and with this heightened activity came a greater emphasis on record keeping and the application of uniform procedure. Simple principles, such as the necessity that conversion be voluntary or that baptism follow a requisite period of instruction, required records against which later events and allegations could be measured. And not surprisingly, many of the most detailed records were produced in response to controversies over the application of the very rules which ecclesiastical élites wanted to see applied—this is true, for example, of the accounts of soldiers' lives from the Milanese ospizio in chapter 5.

Whether and to what extent these characteristics were present in other Catholic territories in Europe, and whether the policies for conversion in those states resembled those in Italy are largely open questions. What is known is largely based on the study of single episodes or local contexts, and a more systematic exploration of these issues, especially in a comparative light, has the potential to tell much more about the place that this set of institutions, policies, and practices occupied in the Catholic world. The evidence outlined in chapter 2 that the example of the Italian Oratorians led to the foundation of institutes for converts in Cologne and several cities in France is one indication that the experiments described in this book found imitators elsewhere. Another is the 1584 foundation of a *Casa de Catecúmenos* in Lisbon, inspired by the one in Rome, which appears to have mainly been used to procure the conversions of Jews and Muslims from Morocco.[3] Was the Roman model of conversion, like the cult of saints, episcopal and liturgical reform or seminaries, a product that could be exported, or did it remain largely within the confines

of Italy, save for a few exceptions? Did the authority of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies over ecclesiastical affairs in their colonies prevent the installation of these kinds of institutes outside of Italy, or were there other factors that made them infeasible in other contexts? These are significant questions, and they can only be answered satisfactorily by research in both local sources and in the archives of the religious orders and the papal congregations.

The quantitative side of these problems has also been scarcely explored, for Italy or elsewhere, at any level higher than that of a single institution or set of records. In addition to many of the common problems that historians face when applying statistical methods to the source materials of the early modern period—incomplete or missing sets of information, inconsistent and overlapping methods of record keeping, and bureaucratic categories that do not necessarily conform to the needs of historical methods—understanding the numerical frequency of conversions is further complicated by the many competing organizations involved and the potential distinctions that could be made between conversions. Developing a system of classification that can adequately represent the different types of conversions and the contexts in which they took place would be a necessity for any attempt at quantifying them. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of workable sets of data are obvious: Understanding the ebb and flow of conversions over long periods of time, and their correlation with larger historical events and processes, would allow for a much clearer evaluation of both the policies that favoured conversion and the lives of those who experienced the passage from one faith to another.

To a certain degree, these questions build upon classic themes in the history of Catholicism: The tension between local practice and the dictates of centralized authorities, debates over the proper relationship between tradition and reform, competition between groups for influence, and the spread of programs of reform from Rome to other parts of the world. Yet as the historiography of the Catholic Church in the early modern period moves beyond the sectarian, confessional terms in which it was first conceived, comprehending the ways in which this newly global organization defined and redefined itself against the other religious communities and traditions it encountered demands historians' attention with a particular urgency. This process never really stopped, driven by events and input both from the local representatives of the church and its Roman leadership. And given the prominent role granted to converts in the church's propaganda and symbolism, it was one in which they often had an influence that belied their minority status within the church. Conversion, both from the perspective of the institutions that fostered it and the individuals who experienced it, has much to say about the character of what Evennett called a 'world form of

Christianity': its understanding of itself and its aims, its contradictions, its places of openness and closure, and its transformations over the centuries.

Notes

1H. O. Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation. The Birkbeck Lectures in Ecclesiastical History given in the University of Cambridge in May 1951* (Cambridge: Cambridege University Press, 1968), pp. 21–2.

2ASPF, SOCG 51, f. 124, 125, two unsigned letters, one dated September 29, 1647, informing the congregation of Giovan Battista Jona's request to receive a portion of the cardinal's inheritance. The second, undated, lists the converts and the amount of money granted to each. A brief biographical sketch of Jodocus can be found in ASPF, SOCG 391, f. 395–96, and Jona's name appears frequently in the records of the congregation during this period.

3C. Stuczynski, 'Subsídios para um estudo de dois modelos de "catecquização" dos judeus em Portugal', in N. Falbel, A. Milgram, and A. Dines (eds), *Em nome da Fé. Estudos in memoriam de Elias Lipiner* (São Paulo: Imago, 1999), pp. 173–201; J. A. Tavim, 'Educating the Infidels Within: Some Remarks on the College of the Cathecumens of Lisbon (XVI–XVII centuries)', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, 5 (2009), pp. 445–72; J. A. Tavim, 'Diásporas para o Reino e Império. Judeus conversos e sua mobilidade: aproximaçoes a um tema', in A. Dore and A. Santos (eds), *Temas Setecentistas* (Curitiba: Fundação Araucaria, 2009), pp. 369–88.

Appendix

Documents from the Italian Archives

The following documents have been selected because they illustrate especially well the kinds of debates and experiences discussed in the book. In different ways, they give a sense of the words that both converts and their ecclesiastical sponsors used when describing the kinds of problems that scholarship identifies in processes such as confessionalization and the spread of religious tolerance. Some of them refer directly to episodes discussed in one of the five chapters; in other cases, they refer to new episodes which are nonetheless directly relevant. None, to my knowledge, have been published before, and I hope that their inclusion here will serve as an aid to future research on this and related topics.

The documents fit roughly into two groups. Some are first-person accounts, in the form of letters written by converts, rich in specific detail that provide insight into the causes that drove individuals to convert from one faith to another and the different tropes and rhetorical strategies that they employed when they attempted to justify their decisions. They include converts from Judaism (documents 1 and 8), a Protestant aristocrat (document 3), and a soldier (document 9). The second type are written by members of the clergy and include excerpts from the administrative records of the Milanese ospizio (documents 4, 5, and 6) and the account of a learned debate between a young German and the monks of Vallombrosa in Tuscany (document 7).

I have left the spelling and punctuation as they appear in the originals and have indicated with brackets and ellipses missing, unreadable, or unclear words and phrases. I have included a short introduction before each text explaining what can be understood about the nature of the document, the identity of its author and intended recipient or recipients, and the historical and geographic contexts in which it was written. The symbol † indicates a lacuna or unreadable passage in the text.

1. A Soul in Torment: A Letter from a Convert to Carlo Borromeo, 1577 (ASDM, Carteggio Ufficiale, Volume 23, ff.nn.)

Unlike many other appeals to authorities for money or favors, this letter stands out because it expresses in simple yet powerful language the state of internal confusion and trauma that afflicted many of those who underwent the process of conversion. Its author, Marcantonio, describes his struggle to reconcile his Jewish upbringing with the dogmas of Christianity, an experience which he compares to 'falling into the depths of the abyss'. While these feelings were accentuated by the arrival of an epidemic in Monza and the death of the archpriest who had been teaching Marcantonio, his complaint that he felt 'neither Jew nor Christian, though I will never again be a Jew', was probably a more common sentiment than it might first appear. That the letter is addressed to Carlo Borromeo, the saint and archbishop of Milan whose program of reform became a model for bishops across the world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, makes it all the more eloquent.

Illustrissimo Monsignore

Conoscendo veramente ch'in quella habitava la summa perfection della legge di Cristo ciò è la carita come San Paolo dice, et conoscendo e io per divina ispiratione ch'ad altro non posso far ricorso di magior gratia dottato sia ch'a Vostra Signoria Illustrissima. Per tanto le gianoch'in terra et con gli occhi bassi, gli dimando misericordia e adiutto Altrimenti sono per periclitar nel profondo dell'abisso, la causa Monsignor Illustrissimo si è che siando natto, e allevato nella legge Hebrea, e per dio gratia con il dono del spirito santo illuminato conobe la vera lege esser la nova instituita da Cristo nostro salvator et per tal cognizione me diedi nelle mani del molto reverendo monsignor arciprete [di] felice memoria, il signor hieronimo magiolino il quale per sua gratia me tieni in casa molti giorni volendo farme insegnar il modo del viver cristiano ma dio nostra signore non permesse (forsi per mei peccati) ame tal gratia, pasato di questa vita, il molto reverendo monsignor padre Giovanni Pietro Brianza desideratissimo della salute mia, credendo di potermi far instruer poi che fusse batizato mi mandò all'aague del santo baptesmo, et io asai desiderosissimo fui hobedientissimo dove che sono 4 mesi che sono cristiano benchè indegno, et per il male contagioso che regnato in Monza, ne il reverendo monsignor padre Giovan pietro m'ha potutto atenderne, tampocco io ho potutto ricerchar recapito, hora che per dio gratia siamo alquanto reautti et che posiamo far sicurtà della nostra sanita, et che Vostra Signoria Illustrissima ancora più che

mai so che desidera il ben commune, et maxime desiderara il mio ancora che non me conoscha, impero che me trovo anbiguo della mete mia che ne son cristiano ne [tanto] pocho Hebreo, benche hebreo gia mai non sarò più. Credendo fermamente loro esser in mal stato, ma cristiano sempre voglio esser, solum che io desidero che Sua Signoria Illustrissima me facia gratia di parlarsi quatro parole che dio nostro signore lo felice alli sup.ni cori. Di Monza il primo di Marzo 1577.

Di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima figliolo humilissimo
Marcho Antonio suo di Giesu Cristo l'hebreo fatto cristiano

Translation

Most Illustrious Monsignor

I know that I cannot make recourse to any other who is more endowed with grace than your Illustrious Lordship, since I have been divinely inspired with the knowledge that in [you] resides the highest perfection of the law of Christ, that is to say charity, as St Paul says. Therefore, with my knees on the ground and my eyes low, I ask for mercy and help. Otherwise I will fall into the depths of the abyss, the reason being great lord is that after having been born and raised in the Jewish law, and by the grace of God illuminated with the gift of the Holy Spirit I learned that the true law is the new one instituted by Christ our savior. And because of this knowledge I placed myself in the hands of the late reverend monsignor archpriest, Lord Hieronimo Magiolino, who out of grace kept me in his house many days in order to teach me the Christian way of living. But God our lord did not allow me this grace (perhaps because of my sins), and after [the archpriest] had passed from this life, the most reverend Monsignor father Pietro Brianza, who was most desirous of my salvation, believing that he could instruct me once I had been baptized, sent me to the waters of holy baptism, and I, who was full of desire, was most obedient. Thus it is four months that I have been a Christian, though an unworthy one, and because of the contagious illness that has taken over Monza, neither father Giovan Pietro has been able to attend to me, nor have I been able to search for him. Now that thanks to God we are in somewhat better circumstances and we can be sure of our health, and since I know that your Illustrious Lordship desires the common good and even more desires my own even though you do not know me, I must say that I find myself ambiguous in my own mind, as I am not a Christian and even less am I a Jew, though I will never be a Jew again. As I believe that I am in a bad state, but ever wish to be a Christian, I only desire that your Illustrious Lordship grant me the favor of a brief

conversation. That God may grant you happiness.

Monza, March 1st, 1577
The most humble son of your Illustrious Lordship,
Your Marco Antonio di Giesu Cristo the Jew made Christian

2. Of Unsound Mind: Leon Sanson Modon, Mantua 1767 (Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Gonzaga 3361, Unnumbered)

Because of the increasing tendency of zealous churchmen to allow or ignore forms of coercion in obtaining the consent of Jews to be baptized, the question of ascertaining a convert's true intentions was given special attention in the eighteenth century, and in many locations, baptisms were only allowed following a formal procedure that guaranteed the convert a period of reflection and isolation from external pressure. In this memorandum, Marcantonio Sartoretti, the head of the catechumen house in Mantova, reveals one particularly difficult case in this letter. A convert in a precarious mental state—his words and gestures were 'those of a crazed and furious man'—who appeared divided between his desire for baptism and his attachment to his family, attempted to escape from the house before completing the course of instruction. After judging him unfit for conversion, Sartoretti ordered his release and had him brought back to the ghetto.

Avendo io rilevato dalle informationi statemi ricercate dal signor avocado Fiscale Don Giacomo Benintendi che l'Eccellenza Vostra desiderava d'esser intesa se quell ebreo giovine Leon Sanson Modon, che nel di 19 del cadente erasi collocato nel luogo pio dei catecumeni fosse sano di mente o pur mente catto, stimo mio dovere di riferirle quanto a principio avevo di lui ideato, e quanto in seguito ho scoperto, e successivamente operato. All'affacciarsi che fece da me questo ebreo il di 19 di questo mese, esibendo di voler farsi Cristiano, dubitai a prima vista che egli scemo, mentre da qualche apparente indizio, cio nulla ostante per sincerarmi del fatto in un'affare di tanta importanza lo feci andare nel pio luogo, ove pare che desse segni d'esser egli sano di mente. Per tale di fatti io stesso lo ritenevo, e come tale lo esposi al signor fiscale benintendi quando mi ricercava della qualità di questo ebreo. Anzi talmente era persuaso che questo fosse sano di mente, che io stesso pregai il detto avocato fiscale portarsi meco al luogo de catecumeni perche egli stesso vedesse se vero era quanto io le raccontavo. Ma l'esito non corrispose alla aspettativa, mentre giunto di compagnia col sig. fiscale al luogo sudetto

nell'aprir che si fece l'antiporto che chiude la casa dei catecumeni balzò all'improviso questo ebreo fuori della porta smanioso e quasi furioso colla faccia torbida, e colli occhi stravolti, tentando di fuggire come di fatti sarebbe fugito se non vi fosse accorsa persona, e se non vi fossi io stato sulla porta stessa assieme col sig. fiscale. Mentre cosi fu l'ebreo trattenuto, e fatto andare con buona maniera nelle stanze interne, fu ricercato da che cosa provenivano queste sue smanie e queste novità. Al che rispose lo stesso che voleva andare in ghetto quando alla giornata immediate non fosse stato batezzato; che da quando era nel luogo dei cattecumeni non era mai stato quieto, che l'amore e rispetto della madre lo obbligavano in modo che stare non poteva, e che o subito Cristiano o subito in ghetto. Non si mancò da me di farci tutte le insinuazioni possibili d'aquietarlo, e consolarlo. Ma siccome tutti li suoi moti, e gesti, ed anche le parole erano di uomo pazzo e furibondo davasi dei pugni nella testa smaniava ed inquieto rendevasi fuor di modo, conoscendo in allora esser questo giovine veramente pazzo stimai in bene dopo tutte le esortazioni da me fattegli in presenza del sig. fiscale, e del sig. Carlo Boldrini, che ivi ritrovavasi, di licenziarlo dal luogo, e di farlo condurre in ghetto, tanto più, quanto che seppi da domestici del luogo, che tutto quel di aveva tentato sempre il detto ebreo di fugire, et era stato torbido et inquieto. E tanto era costui impaziente di ritornare in gheto, che vestito de propri abitii non voleva ne meno aspettare, che seco andasse quella persona che destinata gli avevo per guida, e corse fuori della porta tutto premuroso. Dell'accaduto, e del da me operato ho il vantaggio di rendere ragguagliata l'Eccellenza Vostra, alla quale con profondissimo ossequio mi do pure l'onore di protestarmi. Mantova li 28 luglio 1767, Marcantonio Sartoretti archidiacono e superiore del pio luogo.

Translation:

Having learned from the procurator don Giacomo Benintendi that Your Excellency wished to know whether that young Jew Leon Sanson Modon, who on the nineteenth of this month was placed in the catechumen house, was of sound mind or rather an imbecile, I consider it my duty to relate to you what I had at first thought of him, what I later discovered, and what I did subsequently. When this Jew first came to me on the nineteenth of this month, pretending that he wanted to become a Christian, I wondered at first from some indications if he might be empty-headed, but nonetheless in order to better understand such an important question, I sent him to the catechumen house, where it appears that he gave indication of being of sound mind. I myself held him to be so, and as such I described him to the signor procurator Benintendi when he inquired as to the quality of this Jew. He was so convinced that this man was of sound mind that I myself begged the aforesaid

procurator to go with me to the catechumen house so that he could see for himself if what I was saying was true. However, the result did not correspond to expectations; after arriving at the destination in the company of the procurator, as I was opening the outer door to the catechumen house, this Jew suddenly bounded through the door, in an almost furious, maniacal state, with a darkened face and crazed eyes, attempting to flee—as he certainly would have if no one had arrived, or if I had not been at the door together with the procurator. After the Jew had been detained, and with good manners persuaded to go into the rooms inside, he was asked from whence this mania and these developments had come. To which he himself responded that he wished to go to the ghetto if he was not immediately baptized the same day, that he had not been at ease since he first arrived in the catechumen house, and that his love and respect for his mother made him unable to stay; either he would become a Christian immediately or immediately return to the ghetto. I did not fail to make any and all insinuations in order to calm and console him. But since many of his movements, gestures, and even words were those of a crazy and furious man, and since he was hitting himself on the head and raging and making himself very upset, recognizing that this young man was truly crazed, after all of my exhortations and those of the procurator and of signor Carlo Boldrini, who was there, I judged that he should be let go from that place and brought to the ghetto. This appeared even more just since I had learned from the servants of the house that the aforesaid Jew had attempted to escape that entire day and that he had been dark and restless. He was so impatient to return to the ghetto that, with his own clothes on, he did not want or even wait for the person that I had designated as his guide, and he ran through the door in a great hurry. I have the benefit of informing Your Excellency of the events and what I undertook, and with the deepest obsequy I take the honor of speaking before you.

Mantua, July 28, 1767
Marcantonio Sartoretti archdeacon and superior of the house

3. You Can't Go Home Again: Johann Rudolf Widmann, 1615 (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ambros. G221, f. 284)

A letter to Federico Borromeo from the German aristocrat Johann Rudolf Widmann, containing many spelling and grammatical errors that betray its author's foreign origin, gives a good sense of the kind of disappointments and frustrations that many converts faced. After an unsuccessful attempt to find a position at the Habsburg court in Austria, Widmann returned to his native

Strasbourg (here referred to as the Latinized 'Argentina') impoverished and in need of assistance, only to find a militant local pastor who insulted the papacy and demanded his return to the 'true' faith standing in his way. From Antwerp, where he fled in the meantime, he asked the archbishop for documents that certify the fact that he converted in Milan.

Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Signore

Molti mese sono che Juan Rodolpho Vidman nobile Alemano della città di Argentina si è partito da Roma con una lettera di raccomandatione dal Reverendissimo Padre Claudio Acquaviva generale societatis Jesu al serenissimo arciduca leopoldo accio havesse qualche recapito in suo corte ma perche li fu dato la risposta che sua altezza era gia a bastante provisto di servidori et cosi l'oratore si ha trattinuto alcuni mese in Argentina con suoi parenti ma in questo tempo l'haiuto un disgratia con un predicante il quale non voleva, che li suoi parenti aiutassero se prima l'oratore non durna alla loro feda, et detto predicanto diceva tanto male della santa feda chatolica et dell papa, che veramente una volta li mancava la patientzia et siamo venuto insieme a dare con la mano, et detto predicanto fu colpa che il oratore è stato doi mese in un prigione, et per haver dato con la mano a detto menistro li hanno prohibidato la città di argentina, che non possa andare per doi anni et cosi il supplicante si è andato averso Bruselles et ha parlato all illustrissimo nuntio monsignor Bentivoglia il quale mi dice che scrivesse a quell luogo dove havete abbracciato la santa feda chatolica, che potesse raccomandarmi dapoi all [serenissimo] arciduca alberto hora il oratore ricorra a Vostra Signoria Illustrissima a fare ricordare che il supplicante ha abbracciato la santa feda chatolica in Milano in suo proprio arcivescovato in tempo quanto era il colleggio di sante femene et da poi fu stato mandato in Roma et è stato trattinuto alcuni mese sotto la mano del reverendissimo padre claudio aquaviva il quale scrisse pochi giorni sono ma per haver sentito dall reverendissimo padre rectore in bruselles che dio haveva gia giamato il padre Generale che veramente ha sentito con grandissima dolore per hora non ha altro refugio se non ricorrere a Vostra Signoria Illustrissima et si ricorda la speranza che Vostra Signoria Illustrissima li ha dato all oratore di non voglia mai abbandonare quanto solamente stasse salda nella santa feda questo son riseluto di farlo sino alla morte. Alcuni predicanti li hanno dimandato dove havete ricevuto la feda baptista. Il oratore risponda a Milano dell'illustrissimo et reverendissimo Signor cardinal Boromeo et dicevano che havete visto fa miracoli quell santo Carlo Boromeo come si dice il oratore risponda maracoli infiniti e speriamo che questo presente arcivescovo suo cugino farà la medesima vita et mi dimandorno infinite cose quello che ha visto delli catolici

ma veramente all fine detto predicanto parlava troppo male della santa feda et dell papa et dicevano voi havete meritato un grandissimo castigo per haver dato con la mano all nostro reverendo predicanto ma se voi volete negare la feda papista et dimandare perdono a noi il oratore risponda di perdonare molto volentieri ma negare la santa feda chatolica romana mai in eterno loro rispondevano lasciato li andare a casa del diabolo perche si troppo infondato nella feda papista per questo la supplica humilmente a Vostra Signoria Illustrissima e Reverendissima et viene gienuflesso alli piedi suoi si come regna la cristiana charita in lei di non abbandonarlo in questi suoi tribulatione et persecutione ma voglia ordinare che li sia dato qualche buon alemosina perche l'oratore ha dato speranza alli suoi creditore di pagarlo sopra li aiuto che verranno della benignita di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima et ancora una caldissima raccomandatione et testimonio all'Illustrissimo nuntio et havendomi in cio [favorito] Vostra Signoria Illustrissima potrà dare detta alemosino et la lettere alli signori … il quale mi fara pagare in Anversa una giornato di Bruselles hora il oratore sta aspettando con grandissimo desiderio sino che mi verrà qualche risposta et consolatione della benigna mano di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima et Reverendissima.

La priego Vostra Signoria Illustrissima et Reverendissima per amor di Jesu Cristo non mi voglia abbandonare questa volta in questi miei tribulatione mi farà grazia di mandarmi qualche aiuto et la lettera di raccomandatione che veramente Vostra Signoria Illustrissima fara una charita grandissima ma se per sorte Vostra Signoria Illustrissima non si ricorda forse più dell'oratore potra dimandare per mezo del Signor Federicho Rozon o Monsignor Pion li quali erano superiore in quell tempo[1] per hora non ha per altro da scrivere se non raccomandarmi alla buona grazia di VS Illustrissima alla quale humilmente mi inchino data Antverpen il di 28 di Abrile 1615,

di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima et Reverendissima Humilissimo et obedientissimo servidore et come figlio,
Juan Rodolpho Vidman di Argentina Alemano hora in Anversa

Translation:

Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord

Many months ago, Juan Rodolpho Vidman, a German nobleman of the city of Strassburg, left Rome with a letter of recommendation from the most Reverend Father Claudio Acquaviva, general of the Society of Jesus, to the most Serene Archduke Leopold in order that he might take some position in his court, but because he received the response that His Highness was already sufficiently

equipped with servants, the supplicant stayed for several months in Strassburg with his relatives. In this period, he suffered a disgrace with a [Protestant] minister who did not want his relatives to help him unless the supplicant first returned to their faith, and the said minister said such bad things about the holy Catholic faith and the pope that one time he lost his patience and we came to blows, and because of that minister, he spent two months in prison, and because he struck the minister, he was banned from the city of Strassburg for two years. So the supplicant went towards Brussels and spoke with the most illustrious nuncio monsignor Bentivoglio, who said to me that I should write to wherever I had embraced the holy Catholic faith so that I could then be recommended to the most Serene Archduke Albert. Now the supplicant asks your Illustrious Lordship to recall that the supplicant embraced the holy Catholic faith in Milan in your own episcopal palace when it was the Collegio di Sante Femene and was then sent to Rome and was kept some months under the hand of the most Reverend Father Claudio Acquaviva, who wrote just a few days ago. But because he heard from the father rector in Brussels that God had already called the father general [to him], which he truly learned with much pain, for now he has no other refuge than your Illustrious Lordship and remembers the hope that your Illustrious Lordship gave to the supplicant that he might never abandon [him] as long as he stayed firm in his holy faith, and I am resolved to do this until death. Several ministers have asked him where he received the certificate of baptism. The supplicant responded in Milan, from the most Illustrious and most Reverend Lord Cardinal Borromeo, and they said have you seen that that saint Carlo Borromeo does miracles as they say. The supplicant responded infinite miracles and let us hope that the present archbishop his cousin will lead the same life and they asked me infinite things, [including] what he had seen of the Catholics, but truly at the end that the minister spoke too badly of the holy faith and the pope and they said you deserved a great punishment for striking our minister, but if you want to deny the papist faith and ask our pardon. The supplicant responded that he would very willingly pardon but never deny the Holy Roman Catholic Faith, and they responded let him go to the house of the devil because you are too dedicated to the papist faith. For this he again humbly supplicates your most Illustrious and most Reverend Lordship for a very warm recommendation and testimony to the most illustrious nuncio and having favored me in this your most Reverend Lordship can give the said alms and letter to the gentlemen … who will pay me in Antwerp, a day's journey from Brussels. Now the supplicant is waiting with great desire until some response and consolation will come to me from the benevolent hand of your most illustrious and most Reverend Lordship.

I beg your most Illustrious and most Reverend Lordship for the love of Jesus Christ to not abandon me this time in these tribulations of mine. You will do

me the favor of sending me some help and the letter of recommendation, as truly your most Illustrious Lordship will do a very great act of charity, but if by chance your most Illustrious Lordship does not perhaps remember anything of the supplicant, you may ask signor Federico Rozzone or Monsignor Pionnio, who were superiors at that time. For now he has nothing else to write except to recommend myself to the grace of your most Illustrious Lordship, to whom I humbly bow, dated Antwerp, the 28th day of April, 1615,

a most humble and most obedient servant as a son to your most Illustrious and most Reverend Lordship,
Juan Rodolpho Vidman of Strassburg, a German now in Antwerp

4. Rules for the Collegio Degli Alunni, Milan, 1630s (ASDM, Catec. 12, Unnumbered)

The first statute for the Collegio degli Alunni, the institute for converts founded by Federico Borromeo, provides a detailed prescription for the highly regimented existence which its charges were expected to lead. The careful division of the day into segments of collective prayer, work, and study came out of the monastic rules that had been in use since late antiquity, while frequent confession and communion were relatively new practices that had been encouraged by a number of sixteenth-century Catholic reformers, including Loyola and Carlo Borromeo. These rules were drafted when the institute was only intended for boys between the ages of seven and eighteen, though this requirement was eventually removed.

Regole che s'osservano al presente nel Collegio di Alumni fundato dall'Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo signor Cardinale Federico Borromeo Arcivescovo di Milano

Per tutti li figlioli che entrano in detto Collegio sono accettati nel sodetto Collegio, con facoltà del detto Illustrissimo signor Cardinale, conforme alle regole già date nella fundatione dal sudetto Illustrissimo Cardinale

Non devono esser di minor età di sett'anni, ne di maggior di 18 si non dispensasse altrimente l'Illustrissimo signor Cardinale Arcivescovo

Devono esser heretici, o figlioli di heretici, o vero in pericolo di essere pervertiti dagl'heretici, et di tutto ciò haveranno fede autentica da suoi vescovi, o curati insieme con quella di povertà

Essendo Hebreo, o altro Infidele si tiene l'ordine che Sua Signoria Illustrissima comanda quando li concede il luogo del collegio, provedendoli di Padre spirituale che lo vaddi instruendo nella fede sino che si battezzi.

Doppo accettato si scriva il suo nome, et cognome et età il Padre et Madre, o altri parenti et il giorno che fu accettato in un libro il quale si tenerà dal Rettore di detto Collegio a questo effetto.

Si nota in detto libro, tutte le robbe che portaranno seco, et denaro se ne haveranno, quali si daranno in deposito al Rettore per spendere a suo servitio havendone bisogno.

Si fa il suo stato, et essendo habile a lettere, si procura il maestro, et se a qualche essercitio, si facci l'istesso.

Il Rettore li assegna il suo luoco nel dormitorio con suo matarazzo, lettera coperta, lenzoli, banchino, et scabello, vaso del'acqua santa, et quelli libri che li faranno bisogno, et instrumenti che gli bisogna per suo essercitio, notando nel libro sudetto tutto quello li consegnerà acciò partendo si possi reconsignare il tutto, o vero quando anderanno mutati.

Si mantenerà un lume nel dormitorio quale anco serverà l'invernata nel tempo avanti cena per studiare sedendo tutti ad una tavola massime essendo piccoli se però non sarà ordinato altro dal Priore o deputati.

Doveranno levar la mattina per tempo al sono del Campanello che à questo effetto tenerà il Rettore l'istesso serveranno la sera nell'andare a dormire. Levati faranno una mezz'hora d'horatione recitando prima tutti unitamente le littanie del signore della madonna come anco la sera quando anderanno a dormire.

Finita l'orazione la mattina faranno il suo letto, nettando il dormitorio, una volta per ciascuno avicenda conforme e li ordinerà il Rettore.

Doppo questo quelli che attendono alli studij, attenderanno a studiare sino che sarà tempo d'andare alla scola, et li altri attenderanno al suo essercitio.

Partendosi sempre pigliaranno licenza dal Rettore, et al ritorno si consignaranno all'istesso.

Se saranno vestiti da cherici vaddano accompagnati se sarà possibile, a duoi a duoi, se anderanno all'istessa scola se saranno vestiti de panni del collegio procuri il Rettore di far che ne habbino buona cura, avisando di tempo in tempo li signori deputati del lor bisogno, acciò possiamo proveder.

Il Rettore ogn'otto o 15 giorni intenda dalli maestri li suoi reporti, et del progresso, che faranno nelle lettere, o esercitij et ne darà parte alli signori deputati quando si farà capitolo

Haverà cura diligente, che si confessino ogni quindeci giorni et nelle solennità principali, facendo anco la santa communione quelli che saranno habili.

Si confessaranno dal confessore che gli sarà assignato dal Rettore d'ordine delli signori deputati.

Se vi fosse alcuno che poco fà fosse battezzato, et non intelligente della nostra lingua se li procurerà un padre spirituale che intenda la sua lingua, che

lo confessi, et intruissi sin'che sia sicuro di potersi confessare altrove.

Mangiano tutti unitamente nel Reffettorio con silentio, et modestia mangiandovi anco il Rettore, servendo uno, o duoi di loro, alla tavola a vicenda secondo il bisogno, quali poi mangiaranno ancor essi doppo portato le pitanze et menestra alla tavola legerà sempre alla tavola uno di loro il legendario dei santi o altro libro spirituale conforme al comandamento del Rettore.

Si dia a' ciascuno il suo tovagliolo, coltello, et cogiale de quali ne haverà cura quello che apparecherà il reffettorio.

Essendo di mangiare di carne, se li darà per tre o quattro onze carne di manzo cotta la mattina, una minestra di riso, o altro legame, tre pani da staro, che si dicono crusini per ciascuno et onze 14 di vino adaguato conforme all'ordine del signor Priore, nel suo bocalino di stagnio comprato per questo effetto, col suo bichiero.

La sera se li darà la sua minestra, con un'insalata, con il pane, et vino sudetto.

Essendo di mangiare di magro, se gli darà il pane, et vino sudetto una minestra di legumi, o verdura conforme al tempo con una pitanza di turta, o vero ricotta, o vero ova con qualche frutta a suo tempo, potrà essere ancor una pitanza di pesce salato secondo il giudizio del Rettore, quale doverà essere onze 3.

Essendo vigilia alla sera non se gli dij minestra ma la metà del pane et la metà del vino, un'insalata o vero qualche frutta havendo riguardo alla qualità de figlioli che non potranno digiunare, con intelligenza però sempre de Signori Deputati.

Il Mercordi sempre mangiaranno di magro, avertendo per regola generale il Rettore, che la spesa di ciascuna bocca senza il pane, et vino non sij piu di soldi sette per giornata.

Essendovene de grandi che possino digiunare se li dij la sera solo una de sudetti pagnotti, et 6 o 7 onze di vino.

Alli piccoli se li potrà dare per la colatione alla mattina una delle sudette pagnotte, et questo al giudizio del Rettore con l'ordine del Priore eccetto il mercordi et il venerdi.

Il Rettore se metterà sempre con facoltà dell'Illustrissimo signor Cardinale et se sarà possibile sij sacerdote, o vero in habito al meno con intenzione d'esser sacerdote.

Il Rettore comprarà et provederà le cose necessarie per detto collegio con mandato del Priore, dandone conto ad esso ogni duoi mesi di tutti le spese che si faranno.

Il Rettore pigli in consegna tutte le robbe del Collegio quando entrarà in detto Collegio, conforme all'inventario nel libro che si tiene a questo effetto, et partendosi facci la riconsegna al padre priore.

Il Rettore intervenghi alli capitoli ogni volta che si farà, acciò possi dar conto di quello sarà ricercato dalli signori deputati.

Occorrendo qualche disordine ne dij subito parte al signor Priore, ò vero a qualche deputato acciò si possi provedere.

Habbi facoltà il rettore di dar penitenza a detti figli nelli casi di disobedienza, o negligenza, conforme al caso, come sarebbe di pane, et aqua, o qualche humiliatione alla presenza di tutti nel reffetorio- in altri casi gravi ne dij sempre parte al Priore come sopra.

Concedendo l'Illustrissimo signor Cardinale Arcivescovo il luogo di detto Collegio con donzena à qualche uno che non sij compreso nelli casi sudetti, saranno tenuti anch'essi osservare li sudetti ordini, come doverà diligentemente il rettore haverne cura de tutti.

Translation:

Rules that are observed at present in the Collegio di Alumni founded by the most Illustrious and most reverend signor Cardinal Federico Borromeo archbishop of Milan.

For all of the children who enter into this college, and are accepted into this college with the permission of the said most illustrious lord cardinal, according to the rules already given at the foundation by the aforementioned most illustrious cardinal,

They must not be of less than seven years of age, nor more than eighteen, unless the most illustrious lord cardinal archbishop decides otherwise.

They must be heretics, or sons of heretics, or in danger of being perverted by the heretics, and they will have proofs that certify this fact from their bishops or parish priests, along with certificates of poverty.

If there is a Jew, or other infidel, the orders given by his most Illustrious Lordship will be observed, and a spiritual father who instructs him in the faith until he is baptized will be provided.

After he is accepted, let his name, and last name, and age and father and mother or other relatives and the day that he was accepted be written in a book which will be kept by the rector of the college to this effect.

Let all of the things that they will bring with them, and the money that they will have, be noted in this book and left in deposit with the rector to be spent at his discretion if he so needs.

His status will be noted, and if he demonstrates skill in letters, a teacher will be found for him, and if he is able at some trade, the same will be done.

The rector will assign him to his place in the dormitory with his mattress, bed, sheets, desk and stool, vase of holy water, and those books which he needs, and those tools which he needs for his trade, while noting in the

aforementioned book all of the things that have been assigned to him so that when he leaves they can be returned or in case they need to be changed.

A light will be kept in the dormitory which will also serve for studying during the time before dinner in winter, with all seated at a table, especially since they are little, unless the prior or deputies decide otherwise.

They must rise on time in the morning at the sound of the bell that the rector will keep for this purpose, and they will do the same in the evening when going to sleep. Once they have risen, they will spend a half hour in prayer, after reciting all together the litanies of the lord and the Madonna and will do the same in the evening when they go to sleep.

Once they have finished the morning prayer, they will make their beds and clean the dormitory, one at a time according to the rector's orders. After this, those who are engaged in study will study until it is time to go to school, and the others will practice their trade.

Whenever they leave, they will receive permission from the rector, and they will always report to him when they return.

If they are dressed as clergy, they will be accompanied whenever possible, in twos if they are going to the same school. If they are dressed in clothes that belong to the college, the rector will make sure that they take good care of them and will let the lord deputies know from time to time if there is any need [of new clothes] so that we can provide.

Let the rector inquire every fifteen days about their progress in letters or in the trades from their teachers, and he will inform the lord deputies of it during their meetings.

He will have the solemn task of ensuring that they confess every fifteen days and during the principal holidays, and those who are able will take the holy Communion.

They will confess to the confessor assigned to them by the rector on the orders of the lord deputies.

If there were anyone who was baptized a short time ago, and does not understand our language, a spiritual father who understands his language shall be found, who will confess him and instruct him until he is sure to be able to confess elsewhere.

All will eat together in the refectory in silence and modesty, and the rector will also eat there, and one or two of them at a time will serve at the table according to need, and then they too will eat after they have brought the dishes and soups to the table. One of them will always read at the table a book of the saints' lives or another spiritual book according to the instructions of the rector.

Let each be given his napkin, knife, and spoon, which will be taken care of by the one who prepares the refectory.

If meat is to be eaten, they will be given for three [days] beef cooked in the morning, a broth with rice, or another legume, three bread rolls each, the ones called *crusini*, and 14 ounces of wine according to the orders of the lord prior, in the bottle purchased for this reason, with a glass.

In the evening, he will be given his soup, with salad, with bread, and with the aforementioned wine.

If something lean is to be eaten, they will be given the aforesaid bread and wine, a soup of legumes or greens depending on the season, with a baked dish, or a ricotta, or eggs with some seasonal fruit. There could also be a dish of salted fish, depending on the season and the rector's judgment, which must be 3 ounces.

If it is a vigil, in the evening, they will not be given soup, but half the bread and half the wine, a salad or some fruit, with attention paid to those children who cannot fast, and the lord deputies shall be informed.

On Wednesdays, they will always eat lean, and the rector shall require as a general rule that the expense per person, except for bread and wine, not be more than 7 soldi each day.

If there are any adults who can fast, let them be given only one of the aforesaid loaves and 6 or 7 ounces of wine.

One of the aforesaid loaves can be given to the little ones for breakfast in the morning, and this shall be decided by the rector on the orders of the prior, except for on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The rector shall always be chosen with the assent of the most illustrious lord cardinal, and if possible he shall be a priest or at least someone in orders who intends to become a priest.

The rector will purchase and provide the necessary things for the said college with the mandate of the prior and will report to him all of the expenses that will be incurred every two months.

The rector will take possession of all of the property of the college when he enters into said college, according to the inventory in the book that is kept for this reason, and upon leaving will return it to the father prior.

The rector should take part in the meetings whenever they take place so that he can respond to whatever is inquired by the lord deputies.

If some disorder occurs, he should immediately inform the lord prior or one of the deputies so that provisions can be made.

Let the rector have the authority to give penance to the said boys in cases of disobedience, or negligence, according to the case, be it a diet of bread and water or some humiliation in front of all in the refectory. In other serious cases, he should inform the prior as above.

If the most illustrious lord cardinal archbishop should grant a place in the said college to someone who is not included in the aforesaid examples, they

too shall be held to observe the said rules, just as the rector must diligently take care of all.

5. Report by Angelo Maria Durini to Cardinal Giuseppe Pozzobonelli on the History and Administration of the Ospizio de' Catecumeni in Milan, 1749 (ASDM, Catec. 12, Unnumbered)

This report was the basis for a reform of the administration and procedures of the ospizio in Milan in the mid-eighteenth century. Its author, a high-ranking cleric and papal diplomat, outlines in colorful language the range of abuses that have undermined the purposes of the institute and transformed the pious work of converting souls into a 'low traffic'. The report is also one of the first, if not the only, historical accounts of the institution and provides important insight into its financial base and administration. While the initial statute only allowed for adolescent male 'heretics and sons of heretics', it gradually came to accept women and adult men. The document also indicates that the original hospice was closed in 1728 following a decline in the institute's finances and that from then on its administrators paid to have converts lodged in private houses, rather than operating their own building.

Serie della fondazione e proseguimento dell'Opera pia de Neophiti sino al presente anno 1749 e sua poco proffittevole direzione nel presente sistema

Nel Concilio Provinciale Quinto dicesi ch'essendossi stabilite alcune cose nel concilio pronvinciale primo toccanti agl'Ebrei novellamente Battezati vi s'aggiungono altre appartenenti a medesimi ed altri neophiti cioè che il Vescovo, nella cui diocesi abitino Ebrei procuri che si costituisca una casa o Luogo Pio dove li novelli battezzati o neophiti s'allimentino e s'instruiscono nella via Christiana e quando ciò non si possa commodamente fare, li consegni a qualche luogo pio o deputi qualche sacerdote di cognita bontà ed esperienza che li governi: Inoltre vi sono molti regolamenti da quali si cava che si dovessero tenere longamente sotto tale custodia per invigliare che frequentassero li sacramenti, e vivessero christianamente come buoni cattolici

L'anno 1604 26 Marzo per breve Apostolico fu ordinata la sopressione della parochia di San Vincenzo cosi che la cura delle anime si trasferisse alle vicine parochie di San Tomaso, e di San Gioanni e che tutti li beni e raggioni della Parochia di San Vincenzo s'applicassero in tutto o in parte al Colleggio de Neophiti d'erriggersi in Milano, qual breve si vede disteso nell'infrascritto stromento de 28 Maggio.

Dett'anno 1604 27 Aprile da Monsignore Albergati Vicario Generale del

Emmintentissimo Signor Cardinale Federico Borromeo si sopresse detta Parochia di San Vincenzo e s'applicò tutti li beni e raggioni della medesima al Colleggio de Catechumeni d'erriggersi, e come d'istrumento rogato d'Antonio Ceruti che si vede accennato nel sodetto seguente Istromento de 28 Maggio.

Dett'anno 1604 28 Maggio, per istromento rogato dal sodetto notaro il nominato Monsignore Vicario Generale eresse detto Colleggio de' Neophiti, mediante anche l'espressione, che tale erezione si faceva a norma di quanto fu detto nel Concilio Provinciale Quinto, e lo collocò per modo di provisione in alcune case Parochiali di Santa Eufemia sotto diversi stabilimenti ivi difusamente spiegati, fra quali si legge che dovessero essere sei deputati d'elleggersi sempre dall'Eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Arcivescovo, cioe' tre Ecclesiastici e tre secolari e furono eletti due signori cannonici ordinarij, ed il signor Teologo di San Tommaso in Terr'amara e tre signori Cavalieri secolari, ivi nominati, con che tali deputati si dovessero congregare almeno una volta, la settimana per trattare dell'occorenze del buon Regolamento dell Colleggio. Di più che non s'accettasse alcuno nel Colleggio prima che nella congregazione de detti deputati non fosse esaminata la legitimità de recapiti, quale poi accetato che fosse, s'investigasse quanto prima a qual esercizio fosse più atto.

L'anno 1605 furono applicate al Colleggio sudetto le rendite della Parrochia di San Matteo alla Moneta per istromento rogato del sodetto Giacomo Antonio Cerutti attuario della curia arcivescovile, come da memoria esistente nelle scritture, ma si di questa applicazione, come di quella de beni della parochia di San Vincenzo, come sopra non si trova memoria alcuna, che il Colleggio, ne sia mai stato in possesso a risserva che si ritrova nelle scritture una coppia semplice d'istromento senza la notizia da chi sia rogato, dell'anno 1616 deposito d'un livello di due anni maturatti in detto anno che altre volte si pagava alla Parochia di San Mattia alla Moneta ed in seguito al Colleggio de Neophiti. Come pure si ha un instromento per coppia semplice de 21 Giugno 1612 di confesso per denari depositati dal signor Brebbia in vigore d'atti dell'anno 1611 che si suppone per raggioni attinenti alla stessa Parochia di San Mattia.

L'anno 1618 4 Genaro fu aquistata una casa nella Parochia di San Simpliciano, ed in essa fù trasportato il Colleggio come d'istromento cavato dalla cancelleria arcivescovile dal reverendo signor Giovan Domenico Regretti notaro coadiutore; e l'anno 1719 6 Aprile fu aquistata altra casa vicina, ed incorporata al colleggio.

In una scrittura intitolata Regole, che s'osservano nell Colleggio, la quale dal contenuto, pare possa essere del tempo dell'Eminentissimo signor Cardinale Federico, fra l'altre cose si vede che li filiuoli, che si devono accettare non debbano essere di minor ettà di sette anni ne maggiore di deciotto, che debbano essere eretici o filiuoli d'eretici, e che debbano di tutto aver fede

autentica da loro vescovi o curati insieme con quella di povertà e che per gl'Ebrei o altri infedeli si debba tenere l'ordine che venisse prescritto dall'Eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Arcivescovo.

In altra memoria si legge ancora che l'eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Arcivescovo Federico per la vicinanza delle Valli de Griggioni fondò un colleggio per quelli che convertiti alla Santa Fede Cattolica si ritirassero in Milano, e che gli diede alcune regole, deputando al governo alcuni signori canonici del Duomo e Città; non si sa per se tali massime di riceversi in Colleggio li soli giovani, e con li ricapiti autentici si siano mai mantenute in pratica non avendossi sopra di ciò le memorie antiche ritrovandossi solo che dal 1650 si ricevevano adulti d'ogni qualità nazione ed anche pare con la loro semplice relazione.

La detta congregazione de deputati ebbe il suo effetto, ed assonse il governo di detto colleggio, mentre da diverse memorie ed istromenti, si vede presso la medesima l'amministrazione; non si sa però sin a quando durasse positivamente in tal incombenza imperoche da memoria vecchia, che nomina li deputati e dicendoli tutti morti fuori che Monsignor Pionnio si ha che non essendossene fatti altri, si dovesse dire questo solo deputato ed in un instromento del 7 Maggio 1646 si dice Monsignore Pionnio unico conservatore con tutto ciò però si hanno diversi confessi dell'anno 1650 al 1653 da quali si vede che al Maneggio del Colleggio vi era Monsignore Bussola come deputato e Monsignore Vezolio come Tesoriere, ed al contrario dell'anno 1666 in avanti fin al presente da molti confessi, istromenti, ed altri ricapiti si ha, che sempre il maneggio, e direzzione fu in tutto, e per tutto a carico d'un sol deputato cannonico ordinario della Metropolitana sotto gli ordini del quale poi vi era un sacerdote che assisteva personalmente nel colleggio e credesi che questo sacerdote assistesse per carità, mentre non vi è memoria alcuna a libri, ne vi sono confessi di dimostrare che avesse stipendio.

Non si ha notizia per mancanza di memorie, in qual modo si ricevessero le abiure ne primi tempi della fondazione del Colleggio, e solo si ritrova che dell'anno 1700 monisignor Vicario Generale ricevette un abiura, come pure dagl'anni 1716 e 1717 e di molti altri anteriori, e posteriori si vedono moltissime abiure ricevute da Monsignor Arciprete decano che era amministratore del Colleggio ed altri secondo che venivano delegati, dal Eminentissimo Signor Cardinal Arcivescovo, quali abiure si vedono formate a modo di processo, con l'intervento de ministri della curia, e però si puole persuadersi che anche nel ricevere li catecumeni in colleggio si potesse esaminarli nelle forme mediante tali ministri, per potere cosi con più accertezza venire in chiaro della verità, di quanto da essi veniva rapresentato. Dicesi da persona, che ha conosciuto l'ultimo assistente tali processi d'abbiure, e però si conferma da ciò, che a catecumeni si faceva un esame nelle forme

prima d'esser admessi.

In una memoria vecchia che pare poss'essere circa l'anno 1661 si vede che l'Eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Federico Borromeo aveva assegnato al colleggio una sua decima che haveva in Abbiate Grasso e Lazate come pure alcuni suoi veni che haveva in Abbiate Grasso.

Circa la decima d'Abbiate Grasso si puole credere un equivoco mentre non si è veduta alcuna altra memoria nelle scritture, per quella di Lazate il colleggio, ne è ancora al possesso, ma si vede essere sempre stata solamente una mezza decima.

Per quanto poi spetta alli beni d'Abbiate Grasso, non si sa quali potessero essere, trovandossi soli, che l'anno 1607 a 28 Novembre furono venduti alcuni beni in Abbiate grasso al colleggio da Francesco Piatti da convertirsene il prezzo per pagare debito de fitti decorsi all'eminentissimo signor cardinale Borromeo, che detto Piatti aveva verso il medesimo, e questi beni l'anno 1655 furono dal colleggio allienati, per il prezzo di lire 3368 soldi 3; non avendosi però alcuna memoria di tale capitale, ne se siassi ricevuto dal colleggio, ne in che cosa siasi convertito; si vede però che molti anni prima del 1690 fu fatto un censo, con li signori Mosca di lire 6000; onde si potrebbe credere che dette lire 3368 soldi 3 siano state pagate, ed in seguito convertite in detto censo.

L'anno 1728 per ordine dell'eminentissimo signor Cardinale Odescalchi stante diversi disordini accaduti e che per la tenuità dell'entrata non si potevano facilmente ovviare con mettere in buon sistema il colleggio, fu il medesimo chiuso e li Catecumeni si alimentorono, come tutta via si alimentano in locande o case private, e le donne secondo le circonstanze anche in qualche conservatorio.

La rendita presentanea del colleggio come dall'annessa nota, e circa lire 2356, fra la quale resta compresa la cartella del banco di Sant'Ambroggio di lire 24 mille aquistata per lire 12134 cioè lire 12 mila date da persona pia ed il rimanente de denari del colleggio, qual impiego fu fatto con ordine dell'eminentissimo signor cardinal Arcivescovo e secondo la mente della detta persona pia, con conditione che tanto li utili, come il capitale si possino disporre dal eminentissimo signor Cardinale Arcivescovo, per tempora in parte o in tutto a favore de catecumeni o neofiti, o simil sorte di gente, che venga o sia venuta alla Santa Fede, per raffermargli in quello ed allettar altri ad abbraciarla, qual cartella essendo al 2 per cento, e di rendita annuale lire 480.

Presentemente quest'opera pia continoua essere maneggiata d'un unico deputato canonico ordinario a carico del quale e tutto il peso si del regolamento, delle rendite, come dell'admissione de' soggetti d'ogn'etta' sesso e paese che si presentano per farsi cattolici quali vengono ordinariamente anzi si puole dire sempre senz'alcun ricapito, che giustifichi la loro persona, e non rare volte particolarmente donne, interogate, per qual motivo siano sortite

dalla loro casa asseriscano per aver avutto disgusti con loro parenti, ed anche per motivi più illeciti, come d'essersi accompagnate con qualche uomo, ma che conoscendo la verita' della nostra Religione desiderano di farsi cattoliche per salvare l'anima loro.

Frequentemente tutti costoro dicono di non avere mestiere positivo, e sono miserabili, e dalle loro relazioni si fanno bastantemente conoscere vagabondi, o per genio o per motivi di disgrazie accadutegli si per criminali come per altre cause per il che chiedono dal luogo pio il vitto quotidianno, e frequentissimamente ancora abiti per coprirsi se poi qualcheduno, o uomo, o donna ha qualche mestiere, con tutto ciò non si ritrova d'impiegarli imperoche niuno vuole fidarsi de medesimi. La riuscita poi per l'ordinario e ancora puoco bona poiche doppo essersi fatti cattolici vanno vagando, si puole anche credere con pocca istruzione del Cattolichismo mentre passatti que pochi giorni dell'Istruzione che gli fà il Padre Penitenziere che per le sue occupazioni, non ha' nemen commodo d'istruirli à bell'aggio se ne vanno molto si puole dubitare, senza più pensare a cosa alcuna della Religione, anzi molte volte particolarmente donne messe nel conservatorio della Providenza e promessagli assistenza si per maritarle come procurargli qualche impiego, non hanno voluto longamente starci, e si è dovuto lasciarle andare vagabonde, in somma puochi anzi puochissimi sono quelli, che ancora a' stare alla loro semplice relazione diino indizii di avere una vera vocazione di farsi cattolici, per il solo fine di conoscere la verita' della nostra santa fede cattolica, ma in contrario non puoco chiaramente vi e' luogo da dubitare, che a ciò fare, sijno indoti dalla miseria, in cui si trovino, e di più ben frequentemente si scuopre con il tratto successivo del tempo, che molti fanno l'indegno trafico, con avere reiterato il Battesimo e l'abbiure impunemente giacche tratandossi dell'abiure niuno in particolare vi pone mano al castigo, con tutto ciò non si puole negare che alcuni tanto uomini come donne ancorche' siano venuti con li sopradetti segni molti equivoci della loro vera vocazzione, avendo trovato modo di fermarsi nel paese, o mediante il matrimonio, se erano donne, o altrimenti hanno fatta competente riuscita ma però frequentissimamente molti hanno sempre vissuto in gran parte d'elemosine.

Tal incombenza riesce impossibile a ben dirigerla a chi come sopra ne ha il carico, non meno per l'imperizia delle lingue forastiere che ordinariamente parlano li catecumeni, per il che dal medesimo non si puole intavolare longhi colloquij, per mezzo de quali puotere scavare d'essi la verità, ed imprimergli buone massime circa il vero mottivo di dover farsi cattolici; ne vale a dire che in ciò puol supplire il Padre Penitenziere che l'intruisce, mentre questo restand'anch'esso sempre in dubio di quanto costoro espongono sempre si scarica, con dire, che'egli si rimette a quanto sia per disporre il medesimo amministratore quanto che ancora non tenendossi li catecumeni risserati nel

colleggio riesce impossibile il poter tenergli d'occhio, per scoprire li lor argomenti si se si tratta di uomini com'ancora molto più di donne, per il che vi vorrebbono persone sempre che girassero per le locande, qual cosa non è praticabile dall'amministratore ne puole farlo per mezzo d'altri, imperochè vi vorebbero spese continue, e non addatabili alla tenuità della rendita alla mancanza de recapiti giustificanti le persone parerebbe, che si potesse supplire conscrivere ne paesi, dove li catecumeni rapresentano d'essere cogniti, peraverne le veridiche informazioni di quanto rapresentano questo qualche volta si fa, ma non sempre si per esser impossibile trovare corrispondenze massime in paesi eretici, come per essere d'un disturbo intollerabile; ma facendossi ancora ciò nonostante, non si vegono ad impedire le frodi del mantenimento de catecumeni nel longo spazio di tempo, che è necessario per havere li riscontri giachè essendo essi miserabili, e duoppo necessariamente soccorerli continuamente.

Quanto sopra argomentando dunque il presentaneo amministratore che quasi tutti questi catecumeni siano persone che venghino, o a simulare per vivere alle spese dell'opera pia ed à derridersi della nostra santa fede, o per trovare appoggio nelle loro disgrazie viene ad essere, in una agitazione nel dubbio, ò di prestare assistenza a chi non merita e cosi dissipare mallamente e puoche rendite, o rigettandoli d'essere causa della continuazione ne loro errori sia con permanere fuori del grembo della santa fede catolica, o sia ancora con vivere malamente, per non trovare assistenza dalla quale malavita forsi, si corregerebbero, trovando appoggio. Consultò tale sua agitazione con il Padre Inquisitore, quale li fece animo con dirgli che essendo egli molto tempo fà in Roma, sentì che chi presedeva a quel Colleggio de Catecumeni avendo riferto al Papa, qualmente ne venivano tutte le settimane otto o dieci, e che quasi tutti vi era molto sospetto che non solo fossero vagabondi, ma ancora derisori della nostra santa fede, questo gli rispose, che ancora quando di cento, novanta nove fossero inganatori, ed uno solo da vero si convertisse venivano ad esser ben impiegate, e le rendite e le fatiche. Cio è vero, ma peraltro non sembra cosa prudente il dedurne, che dunque si debba lasciare la porta aperta a chi si sia scostumato, e vagabondo il potere con una semplice simulata relazione venire a farsi mantenere a spese del Luogo Pio facendo indegno trafico sopra la santa fede cattolica. Oltre di che essendo le rendite del luogo Pio in Milano molto ristrette se queste s'impiegassero in chi che sia che venga a presentarsi, certamente in puoco tempo, sarebbero consumate, e pero' impossibile si renderebbe il socorso à chi potesse presentarsi con coherenze tali da poterne fare un buon giudizio. Non si deve però tralasciare di riflettere, che di questi tali, sono rarissimi li casi, e se si volesse fissare di non admettere niuno, che non fosse munito de recapiti giustificanti la loro vera vocazione al Catolichismo senz'altro mottivo ne d'interesse ne d'altro certamente che forsi

si passarebbe qualche anno senza l'admissione d'alcun catecumeno. Dacciò però ne nascerebbe un buon effetto mentre accumullandossi le rendite si verebbe con il tratto sucessivo del tempo a formare un capitale bastante per potere fissare nuovamente il Colleggio, ma regolato da ministri bastanti a tenerlo in buon ordine, e con il modo di obbligare li Catecumeni ad ivi travagliare, dal che ne seguirebbe che chi fosse puramente vagabondo, per non aver volonta' d'impiegarsi in cosa alcuna non verebbe a presentarsi.

Translation:

On the foundation and progress of the Opera Pia de Neofiti up to the present year 1749 and its none too profitable direction under the present system.

It is stated in the Fifth Provincial Council that having established certain things in the First Provincial Council regarding newly baptized Jews, other things regarding the same and other neophytes can now be added: That any bishop whose diocese has Jews living in it must institute a house or pious foundation where the newly baptized or neophytes can be fed and instructed in the Christian way. And when this cannot be easily done, he should remit them to some charity or entrust the task of governing them to some priest of known character and experience. Furthermore, there are many regulations from which one learns that they should be kept a long time under such supervision, to ensure that they observe the sacraments and live in a Christian manner as good Catholics.

In the year 1604 on March 26, an apostolic brief ordered the suppression of the parish of San Vincenzo and that its *cura animarum* be placed under the nearby parishes of San Tommaso and San Giovanni, and all of the property and rights belonging to San Vincenzo were to be applied in total or in part to the Collegio de Neofiti that was to be erected in Milan, and this brief can be seen in full in the copy of the deed of May 28.

In the said year of 1604 on April 27, Monsignor Albergati, vicar general to the Most Eminent Lord Cardinal Federico Borromeo, suppressed the said parish and transferred its rights and property to the Collegio de Catechumeni, as can be seen in the deed drawn up by Antonio Cerutti that is referred to in the following deed of May 28.

In the said year of 1604, on May 28, in a deed drawn up by said notary, the aforementioned Monsignor vicar general founded said Collegio de' Neofiti, expressing that this foundation was being made according to what had been stated in the Fifth Provincial Council, and he placed it provisionally in some parish houses in Sant'Eufemia. One reads that the most eminent lord cardinal archbishop would have chosen six deputies, three clergymen and three laymen, and two canons ordinary were selected, and the lord theologian of San

Tommaso in Terramara, and three lay gentlemen, and that these deputies would meet at least once a week to discuss the needs of the good administration of the college. Futhermore, it is stated that no one should be accepted into the college before the legitimacy of his claims has been examined in a meeting of the said deputies and that once he is accepted, they should investigate right away what type of work might be most suitable for him.

The records show that in the year 1605, the rents from the parish of San Matteo alla Moneta were transferred to the said college in a deed drawn up by the aforesaid Giacomo Antonio Cerutti actuary of the archiepiscopal curia, but there is no record either for this transfer or the one of the property of the parish of San Vincenzo that the college ever possessed them, except for a simple copy of an act from 1616, without any indication of who drew it up. It establishes the deposit of rents for two years which matured that year that had in the past been paid to the parish of San Matteo alla Moneta and later to the Collegio de' Neofiti. Similarly, there is a copy of an act dated June 21, 1612, confirming the receipt of moneys deposited by signor Brebbia from 1611 that is supposedly for rights belonging to the parish of San Mattia.

On January 4, 1618, a house was purchased in the parish of San Simpliciano, and the college was transferred into it, as can be seen in a deed taken from the archiepiscopal chancellery by signor Domenico Regretti, assistant notary; and on April 6, 1719, another nearby house was purchased and incorporated into the college.

In a writing entitled 'Rules' that are observed in the Collegio, which from its contents appears to be from the time of the most Eminent Lord Cardinal Federico, one sees that, among other things, that in order to be accepted boys, must not be younger than seven years of age nor older than eighteen, that they must be heretics or sons of heretics, and that they must have proof of this from their bishops or priests together with proof of their poverty and that for Jews or other infidels the order prescribed by the most eminent lord cardinal archbishop must be followed.

In another record, one reads that due to the proximity of the of valleys of Graubünden, the most Eminent Lord Cardinal Archbishop Federico founded a college for those who, having converted to the Catholic faith, retreated to Milan and that he gave to it some rules and assigned some canons of the cathedral to govern it; it is not known whether such rules to allow only youths with proper certification to be received in the college were ever put in practice, since there are none of the oldest records. One finds only that from 1650 adults of all nations were admitted and it appears only that they had to give a simple statement.

The said congregation of deputies had its intended effect and took over the administration of the said college, as can be seen from various records and

documents. It is not known how long it continued to perform this task, as an old document names the deputies and says that they are all dead except for Monsignor Pionnio and that since no others were named, there should only be this deputy. A deed dated May 7, 1646, says that Monsignor Pionnio was the sole curator. Yet there are also a number of receipts from 1650 to 1653 which show that the college was run by Monsignor Bussola as deputy and Monsignor Vezzolio as treasurer, and on the contrary, there are many receipts, deeds, and other documents that prove that from the year 1666 until the present, the management and administration were under the control of a single deputy canon of the cathedral together with a priest who assisted him in the college and it appears that this priest did so out of charity, as there is no record of any receipts that demonstrate that he had a salary.

For lack of records, there is no way to know in what way abjurations were made during the first years after the foundation of the college, but one finds that in 1700, an abjuration was made to the vicar general, just as from 1716 to 1717, and for many years before and after, there were very many abjurations made before the deacon archpriest who was administrator of the college and to others as delegated by the most eminent cardinal archbishop. These abjurations were formulated in terms of a trial, with the participation of the ministers of the curia, and because of this, it is possible that the catechumens were examined by the ministers when they were admitted to the college, in order to better understand whether what they said was true. A person who knew the last assistant in these trials of abjuration confirms that the catechumens were given an examination before being admitted.

In an old document which appears to be from around 1661, one sees that the most Eminent Cardinal Federico Borromeo had assigned a tithe from Abbiategrasso and Lazate as well as some properties that he had in Abbiategrasso to the college.

Regarding the tithe from Abbiategrasso, it is possible that this is a mistake, since there is no record of it, while the one from Lazate is still in the college's possession, though it was never more than a half tithe. Regarding the properties in Abbiategrasso, it is not known what they might have been, as the only thing that can be found is that on November 28, 1607, some properties in Abbiategrasso were sold to the college by Francesco Piatti in order to repay past rents that he owed to cardinal Borromeo. In 1655, these properties were alienated by the college for the price of 3,368 lire and 3 soldi; however, there is no record of this capital or whether it was received by the collegio or into what it was converted. One can see, however, that many years prior to 1690, a rent of 6,000 lire was purchased from the signori Mosca; it is possible that the said 3,368 lire and 3 soldi were paid and later converted into this income.

In the year 1728, because the college could not be put in order due to the

effects of numerous disorders and lack of income, it was closed at the order of cardinal Odescalchi. The catechumens began to be fed and housed, as they still are, in private houses or inns, and according to circumstances, the women are placed in conservatories as well.

The current income of the college, as can be seen from the attached note, is around 2,356 lire, in addition to the deposit in the Banco Ambrogiano of 24,000 lire acquired for 12,134 lire, 12,000 of which were donated by a pious individual and the rest of which are moneys belonging to the college. This investment was made on the order of the most eminent cardinal archbishop according to the wishes of the said pious individual, on the condition that both the interest and the capital would be used by the most eminent cardinal archbishop for catechumens and neophytes or similar persons who are intending to or have already come to the holy faith, both to harden their faith and encourage others to embrace it. This deposit brings 2 per cent interest, an annual return of 480 lire.

Presently this charity continues to be managed by a single deputy, a canon who bears all of the responsibility for the regulation, income, and admission of the individuals of every age, sex, and country who wish to become Catholic. These people usually, or rather always, come without any documentation that could prove who they are. Not infrequently women who are asked why they decided to leave their homes assert that it was due to conflict with their relatives or for even more illicit motives, such as having been with some man, but that after having learned of the truth of our religion, they wish to become Catholics to save their souls. Frequently these people say that they have no real trade and are miserably poor, and in their stories they describe themselves more or less as vagabonds, either by choice or out of disgraces that they have suffered or crimes or other reasons. For this reason, they beg for their daily meals from the institute and very frequently also ask for clothes to cover themselves. If one of them, either man or woman, does in fact possess any skills, they are unable to put them to use because no one trusts them. So for the most part, after becoming Catholics, they usually end up wandering, and one suspects that they don't get much instruction in the catechism, because after the few days in which the father penitentiary teaches them, they go on their merry way without giving another thought to religion. In particular, on many occasions, women who have been placed in the Conservatorio della Provvidenza and promised help in finding a husband and some sort of work have not wanted to stay there long, and they have been let go to wander. In short, there are few, if not very few, who according to their own words give any indication of having a true vocation to become Catholics for the sole purpose of knowing the truth of our holy Catholic faith. On the contrary, there is reason to doubt that they are induced to do so by the misery in which they

find themselves, and what is more, one frequently discovers that after some time has passed, many of them engage in the low traffic of repeating baptism and abjuration with impunity, since for abjurations no one will punish them. Despite all this, it cannot be denied that some, both women and men, though they came with the somewhat vague indications of their true vocation mentioned before, have managed to succeed once they were able to stay in the country, either through marriage if they were women or in another manner, but more frequently many of them have lived mostly on alms.

It is impossible for whoever is in charge to manage this task, because of the lack of expertise in the foreign languages that the catechumens ordinarily speak, which makes it impossible to engage in long discussions in which one could extract the truth from them and impress upon them good principles regarding the true reason for becoming Catholics. This means that the father penitentiary can serve as a substitute who can instruct them, though he too has expressed doubts as to whether they tell the truth. He says that he is in agreement with the administrator's plans, since it is impossible to keep an eye on the catechumens as long as they are not enclosed in the college and that in order to discover the designs of both women and men, there should always be people who move about the inns. The administrator is not capable of doing this, nor could it be done by others, because of the continuous expense that it would require and which would be beyond the means of the charity. It appears that it might be possible to make up for the catechumens' lack of proofs by writing to the places where the catechumens claim that they are known, to obtain reliable information. Sometimes this is done, but not always, both because it is often impossible to find correspondents, above all in the lands of heretics, and because it is an intolerable burden. Nevertheless, even when it is done, it does not prevent fraud over the long term, which is necessary because if they are miserably poor, it becomes necessary to help them continuously.

The current administrator argues therefore that almost all of these catechumens are persons who come either to deceive in order to live at the expense of the charity and mock our holy faith or to find support in their misfortune. He doubts whether it is better to give assistance to those who do not deserve it and dissipate what little income there is or to reject them and cause them to continue in their errors by remaining outside the bosom of the holy Catholic faith, and even more so by giving themselves over to a life of crime which they might avoid if they found support.

He consulted on this matter with the father inquisitor, who heartened him by saying that when he was in Rome a long time ago, he heard that after the head of the Collegio de Catecumeni there had related to the pope that every week eight or ten came who he suspected were not only vagabonds but scorners of our holy faith. The pope responded that even if ninety-nine out of a

hundred were impostors and only one a genuine convert, both the money and the effort would be well spent. That is true, but it does not seem prudent to conclude that one should allow any ill-mannered vagabond to be able with just a simple false story to come and live at the charity's expense, making a cheap racket out of our holy faith. Furthermore, the income of the charity in Milan is very small and if it was employed for whoever asked, it would very quickly be exhausted and it would become impossible to give aid to those with coherent stories who give a good impression. At the same time, it must not be overlooked that these are extremely rare cases, and if it was decided not to admit anyone who lacked proofs corroborating their true vocation to Catholicism without any other motivation or interest, perhaps several years would go by without a single catechumen being admitted. Yet that would lead to a good outcome and by saving the income it would be possible in the following period to accumulate enough capital to reopen the college, governed by enough ministers to keep it in good order, and with the means to put the catechumens to work there. If this were the case, no one who was purely a vagabond would ask to enter, because he would not have any desire to work.

6. New Rules for the Milan Ospizio de' Catecumeni, 1749 (ASDM, Catec. 12, Unnumbered)

This statute was developed as a response to the onslaught of false conversions and attempts to defraud the institute described in the previous document. In addition to assigning another full-time assistant to the administrator of the charity, the statute institutes two new measures: Every convert seeking assistance must provide documentary proof of his or her identity from authorities in the places where they were born or lived in prior to Milan, and all converts must respond to a detailed questionnaire regarding both their personal history and their religious beliefs. The officials hoped that these provisions would allow them to spot inconsistencies in the stories that converts recounted about themselves and separate legitimate requests from illegitimate ones. The statute also institutes, for the first time in Milan, harsh penalties for those found guilty of perjury, including prison.

Regolamento ordinato dall'Eminentissimo Signor Cardinale Arcivescovo da'osservarsi nell'acettazione de Neoffiti sotto il 16 Maggio 1749

I. Presentandosi qualche Neoffito per essere mantenuto a spese del pio instituto frattanto che viene instruito nella nostra Santa Fede, si fara' lui la cominazione di gravi pene anche di carcere, quando fosse ritrovato reo d'inganni, falsità, e molto più di sprezzo, o anche solamente di poca stima della

nostra vera Religione; Ed in tal caso se ne darà parte all'Eminentissimo per l'esecuzione di dette pene.

II. Ogni neoffito dovrà esibire a Monsignore Amministratore i necessarj ricapiti in forma autentica, o almeno comendatizie di pruova equivalente. Indi sarà esaminata privatamente sopra i dogmi della sua setta, ed altre cose come sembrerà espediente; E poscia in altra forma legale secondo il formolario qui annesso; E per fine si passerà all'abiura, doppo la quale si procederà a norma delle regole del Pio Instituto per il coltivamento della salute spirituale del convertito.

III. Mancando ad alcuno i sodetti ricapiti ne potendosi questi avere come neppure equivalenti notizie per pruova, si procurerà supplire con un più rigoroso esame sopra la sua setta, e trovandosi esso fallace nelle risposte, se sarà maschio si dimetterà (salve le sudette pene) e se sarà femina massimamente pericolante, si collocherà, e manterrà in qualche conservatorio o altro luogo sicuro ad ogni onesto buon fine sin che si abbiano più acertate notizie. Quando poi il Neoffito, o Neoffita nel primo esame privato diano prudente indizio di essere veramente tali, e veramente desiderosi di convertirsi alla Santa Fede, si passerà al secondo esame in forma legale, e per ultimo all'abiura.

IV. Per sollevare in parte dal peso Monsignore Conte Angelo Durini presentaneo Amministratore per sua istanza fatta all'Eminentissimo, esso Eminentissimo Sig. Cardinale Arcivescovo gli assegna per collega, per quanto si aspetta agli esami da farsi come sopra à Neoffiti Monsignore Teologo Mazzoleni.

Interogatorij

Interogatorio 1. Qual sia il suo nome, e cognome: quale il nome, e cognome de suoi Genitori.

Risposta

Interogatorio 2. Qual sia la di lui Patria; quale la sittuazione della medesima, e sotto quale Dominio questa si truovi.

Risposta

Interogatorio 3. Della sua età, della religione de suoi Genitori, e della propria.

Risposta

Interogatorio 4. Come sia stato educato, quale proffessione, o mestiere abbia egli esercitato.

Risposta

Interogatorio 5. Quanto tempo siasi fermato in Patria, e come ne sia partito, con la causa della partenza.

Risposta

Interogatorio 6. Descriva minutamente il suo viaggio, e le dimore, che ha fatte in altri Paesi.

Risposta

Interogatorio 7. Come siasi contenuto ne Paesi cattolici: appresso di che abbia vissuto, e con quale regolamento di vita.

Risposta

Interogatorio 8. Se ne Paesi cattolici abbia veduta alcuna funzione di quelle che li cattolici fanno; le descriva, e dica qual sentimento ne concepisse, e se ne abbia parlato con alcuno; con chi, e come.

Risposta

Interogatorio 9. Ricevuta la descrizione de suoi viaggi da lui sopra deposto, dica quanto tempo sia che egli si ferma in Milano.

Risposta

Interogatorio 10. Dove abbia egli fin ora abitato, con quali Persone abbia trattato; quai discorsi di Religione abbia fatti, o come con dette Persone siasi contenuto.

Risposta

Interogatorio 11. Se siasi portato solo, o accompagnato a vedere funzioni ecclesiastiche in quai luoghi, con le sue circostanze.

Risposta

Interogatorio 12. Ritenuta l'educazione da lui sopra deposta dica precisamente cos'egli abbia creduto fin'ora in materia di Religione.

Risposta- se si porta ad Eresia-

Interogatorio 13 L'interoghi sopra il decalogo

sopra il peccato originale, ed attuale-
sopra li meriti di Gesù Cristo-
sopra la Fede-
sopra la Chiesa- capo invisibile- e cosa dica d'altro capo (visibile)
sopra i libri del vecchio, e nuovo Testamento-
sopra i sacramenti- particolarmente sopra il Battesimo e la cena
sopra le disposizioni necessarie a detti sagramenti
sopra la grazie del signore, ed altre cose conforme la capacità del soggetto
Che se riportasi della prima causa- Dio- creazione delle cose- sopra la legge vecchia- Patriarchi- e massime Abramo e Moise
Proffeti- e qualche Profezia
sopra il Messia-
sopra le orazioni particolari della setta-
sopra le azioni morali ne contratti-
sopra il matrimonio-
sopra i sacramenti della legge vecchia che li dica distintamente, e li spieghi co' loro effetti
sopra la morte- Premio de Buoni, castigo de cattivi e sopra altre somiglianti cose a misura della capacità

Cadendo in qualche contradizione o di fatto o di dottrina.

se sarà femina
si sopraseda dall'esame, e si ripiglij questo un altro giorno
se sarà uomo s'interoghi

Interogatorio 15. Come abbia egli potuto dire che … se prima ha deposto che …

Opure

Interogatorio 16. Come egli abbia spiegata la Religione sua ne termini … sebbene si sa, che anzi gli Eretici … gli Ebrei … i Maomettani … tengono l'opposto … o tengono lo stesso, ma nella forma…. e non già …

Risposta

Interogatorio 17. Che si hà nonostante mottivo di crederlo affettato … Mentitore … e che perciò quando Egli non renda miglior conto di se medesimo si passerà a ciò che sarà più convenevole da SS.ri Superiori.

Risposta

Tunc dimissus fuit cum debitis protestationibus ad effectum.

Translation:

Rules ordered by the most eminent cardinal archbishop to be observed in the acceptance of Neophytes on May 16, 1749.

I. When a neophyte asks to be sustained at the expense of the pious institute while being instructed in our holy faith, he shall be inflicted with grave penalties, including prison, if he should be found guilty of deceptions, falsehoods, and even more if he is culpable of contempt, or even of just little respect for our true religion; and in this case, the most eminent [archbishop] will be informed for the execution the said penalties.

II. Every neophyte must present the necessary proofs in authentic copies, or with equivalent letters that support it. Then he will be interrogated privately regarding the dogmas of his sect and other things that appear necessary; and then formally according to the questions attached below. And lastly, the abjuration will take place, after which the rules of the pious institute for the cultivation of the spiritual health of the convert shall be followed.

III. If someone lacks the said proofs and is unable to procure them even in an equivalent form, a rigorous examination about his sect will substitute, and if the person is found to be fallacious in his responses, if it is a man he shall be dismissed (except for the said penalties) and if it is a woman, especially one at risk, she shall be placed and sustained in a conservatory or in another secure place for honesty's sake until more certain information can be had. If the neophyte, male or female, shall give evidence of being truly desirous of converting to the holy faith during the private interrogation, he or she shall be sent on to complete the second formal interrogation and lastly to the abjuration.

IV. At the request of Monsignor Count Angelo Durini, the acting administrator, in order to lighten his burden the most Eminent Cardinal Archbishop assigns Monsignor Theologian Mazzoleni as his colleague for matters regarding the said examinations of neophytes.

Questions

Question 1. What is his name and family name; what are the names and family names of his parents.

Response.

Question 2. What is his homeland; where is it and under the control of which lord.

Response.

Question 3. Regarding his age, his parents' religion and his own.

Response.

Question 4. How he was educated and which profession or trade he practiced.

Response.

Question 5. How long he remained in his homeland, how he left, and the reason for the departure.

Response.

Question 6. Let him describe his travels minutely and the sojourns that he made in other countries.

Response.

Question 7. How he behaved in Catholic countries; with whom did he live and what kind of life did he lead.

Response.

Question 8. If he witnessed any ceremony practiced by Catholics in Catholic countries, let him describe it and say what sort of feeling he developed towards it, and if he spoke about it with anyone, let him say who and what was said.

Response.

Question 9. After hearing the description of his travels deposed as above, let him say how long he has been in Milan.

Response.

Question 10. Where he lived until now and which people he encountered; what statements on religion he made and how he comported himself with said persons.

Response.

Question 11. If he went by himself or in the company of others to ecclesiastical functions, in which places, and his circumstances at the time.

Response.

Question 12. Considering the education he received and described above, let him say what he believed until now in matters of religion.

Response—if indicating heresy.

Question 13. Let him be interrogated on the Ten Commandments.

on original and actual sin
on the merits of Jesus Christ
on faith
on the church, its invisible head, and what he says of its other (visible) head
on the books of the Old and New Testament
on the sacraments, particularly baptism and the lord's supper
on the necessary dispositions for the said sacraments
on the grace of God and other things according to the ability of the person being questioned
The first cause—God—creation of things—on the old law—the Patriarchs—and especially Abraham and Moses
the Prophets and some of the prophesies

on the Messiah
on the prayers particular to the sect
on moral action in contracts
on marriage
on the sacraments of the old law—let him say them distinctly and explain them with their effects
on death—the reward of the good, punishment of the wicked, and on other similar things that can measure his ability

If he falls into some contradiction, either regarding facts or doctrine,

if a woman,
let the questioning be suspended until another day.
if a man, let him be questioned further.

Question 15. How he was capable of saying that … if he had earlier said that …

Or

Question 16. How he explained his religion in the following terms … even if it is known that rather heretics … Jews … Muslims…. hold the opposing belief … or that they hold the same one but in this form … and not …

Response.

Question 17. That there is reason to believe nonetheless that he is a dissimulator … a liar.. and that therefore until he gives a better account of himself the superiors will take such measures as appear fit.

Response.

Then he was let go with the necessary warnings.

7. Debating the Finer Points of the Bible: Philipp Beinold and the Monks of Vallombrosa, circa 1675 (ASF, Miscellanea Medicea 367, f. 169–170)

This undated, unsigned letter was sent to the ducal secretary Apollonio Bassetti

(1631–1699) in Florence and recounts an encounter between an educated German Lutheran and the remote community of Benedictine monks living in the monastery of Vallombrosa in Northern Tuscany. The letter recounts in detail the many points of Catholic and Lutheran doctrine which one of the monks debated with the young man over several days. Beinold conceded many of his claims regarding the interpretation of the Bible, yet stopped short of becoming a Catholic. Though he was willing to recognize that Luther was 'a rascal', he remained 'most obstinately' opposed to the Papacy and the Council of Trent, and the author of the letter expressed his hope that with the assistance of other priests, Beinold might finally be persuaded to abandon his heretical convictions.

La sera delli 18 arrivò a Vallombrosa il signor Filippo Beinold e fu ricevuto da quel P. Abbate e Padre Romito e ben trattato insieme col signor Loroine, la notte si fece paricolar orazione si quel monastero, come in Santa Trinita li giorni seguenti. La mattina del di 19 fecero il primo congresso il Padre Romito Don Angelico huomo di gran bontà e dottrina et il signor Filippo e signor Loroine, e dopo varij discorsi interrogato, il giovane di qual Religione fosse, et esso risposto esser luterano, s'introdusse all'ora il Padre Romito a dimostrarli con chiarezza quanto fosse stato in errore il suo Dottore Lutero. Confessò essere false molte proposizioni luterane, ma che haveva dubbio principalmente nella confessione, quale non stimava essere de jure divino: soggiunge il padre romito, se io vi dimostrerò essere la confessione necessaria alla salute dopo il peccato, resterete soddisfatto? Rispose di si, et all'hora gli citò il passo dell'evangelio Quodcunque ligaveris[2] non potersi percio ottenere la giustificazione che per mezzo della penitenza, onde esser questa necessaria e per levarli ogni ombra gli apportò l'autorità di Lutero contra gli anabatisti che dice: *Nos fatemur sub Papatu esse [plurimum] boni Christiani, imo omnem bonum Christianum, atque etiam illinc ad nos devenisse: quippe fatemur in Papatu veram esse scripturam sacram, verum baptismum, verum sacramentum altaris, veras claves ad remissionem peccatorum, veram Christianitatem, verum nucleum Christianitatis.* [3]

Non si piegò per questo ma forse per scansarsi dal discorso, disse che nelle materie di coscienza voleva intendere la sacra scrittura a suo modo. Qui fini la prima disputa, e dalle celle tornò a Vallombrosa. Negli altri dui giorni susseguienti hebbero insieme altre tre conferenze, nelle quali è ristato appagato contro molti errori del suo maestro Lutero. Solo sta fisso in negare la necessaria obedienza al Pontefice, non volendo sottoporsi alle Astinenze della carne il giorno di venerdi, e di sabbato, ne meno all'osservanza della quadragesima. Hebbero un lungo colloquio sopra l'invocazione de santi aborrita da Luterani. Asseriva il Giovine essere abusi di Santa Madre Chiesa

servirsi de' Santi per nostri mediatori e delle lor reliquie, su questa propositione volse il Padre Romito si convincesse da se medesimo con dimandarli per qual causa quel morto posto a caso nel sepolcro d'Eliseo Profeta risuscitasse? A che rispondendo Perche Iddio per li meriti di Eliseo Profeta si compiacque risuscitarlo, replicò il Padre, che non altro era il senso della Chiesa Romana circa il culto de' santi … Portò in mezzo il giovine anche quest'altra difficoltà che la sacra scrittura non ammette alcuno interprete, ma si deve pigliare ut verba sonant: A questa opinione il Padre contrapose quel passo= Pater maior me est[4] et interrogandolo se l'intendeva ut verba sonant: Rispose s'intende secundum humanitatem, di maniera che così in questa, come in molti altri sue difficoltà restò da per se sodisfatto, e convinto, e concesso esser il suo Maestro lutero non un dottore, ma un Birbone.

Persiste ostinatissimo contro il Papa, e contro il Concilio di Trento. E scrive il Padre Romito essersi molto affaticato con quel P. As.e per discrederlo da molti errori imbevuti dalla prattica del suo paese haver conosciuto in lui un gran'profitto prima per la grazia dei, che si vede lo illumina, et appresso le ragioni delle quali si è reso capace, e haverebbero operato se non havesse risoluto partire contro la volontà et insistenza loro, che havevano zelo di far molto più, ma egli per quanto puo sfugge i discorsi in materia di Religione e di fede, e lo ritira tanto quanto il timore di non perdere in Patria i suoi haveri. Per tanto esser necessario coltivarlo per pienamente persuaderlo con l'aiuto divino e con l'assistenza di buoni et esperti sacerdoti, altrimenti si perderà l'acquistato.

Translation :

On the evening of the eighteenth, signor Philipp Beinold arrived in Vallombrosa and was received by the Abbot and the hermit father and treated well, together with signor Loroine. That night prayers were said in that monastery, as in Santa Trinita on the following days. On the morning of the nineteenth, the hermit father, Don Angelico, a man of great goodness and doctrine, met for the first time with signor Philipp and signor Loroine, and he questioned the young man for a long time about his religion. And when he responded that he was a Lutheran, the hermit began to show him clearly how much his doctor, Luther, was in error. He confessed that many Lutheran propositions were false but said that above all he had doubts regarding confession, which he did not consider to be instituted by divine law. The hermit father asked him: If I can show you that confession is necessary for salvation after sin, will you be satisfied? He responded affirmatively and so he cited to him the passage of the gospel 'Whatever you shall bind' to show that justification cannot be obtained except by means of the sacrament of penance,

which therefore is necessary. And in order to remove any doubt, he cited the authority of Luther himself, who in his tract against the Anabaptists says,

> We confessed that under the papacy there is a large degree of what a good Christian is, even all of what a good Christian is, and that some of it even came to us through it; in fact we confessed that in the Papacy there is the true holy scripture, the true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys which absolve the sins, the true Christianity, the true core of Christianity.

He did not bend at this but perhaps in order to avoid the issue, he said that in matters of conscience he wanted to understand holy scripture in his own way. Here the first disputation ended, and from the cell he returned to Vallombrosa. During the following two days, they met and talked three more times, and he proved willing to reject many of the errors of his master, Luther. Yet he remains unmovable on the questions of obedience to the pope, abstinence from meat on Fridays and Saturdays, and the observance of Lent. They had a long discussion of the invocation of saints, which is abhorred by the Lutherans. The young man asserted that it is an abuse of the Holy Mother Church to use saints and their relics as our mediators. On this point, the hermit father wished that he would be persuaded on his own and asked him how the dead man who ended up by chance in the tomb of the Prophet Elisha was resuscitated. To which he responded that because God decided to resuscitate him due to the merits of Elisha. The father responded that this was no different from the teaching of the Roman Church on the cult of saints … The young man also raised the objection that holy scripture does not allow any interpreters, but must be taken as its words sound: To this the father countered with the passage 'The Father is greater than I' and asked him if he interpreted it as the words sound. He responded that it should be understood according to humanity, and in this manner, he was satisfied regarding this and many other difficulties and became convinced and conceded that his master, Luther, was not a doctor but a rascal.

He remains obstinately opposed to the pope and the Council of Trent. And the hermit father writes that he struggled greatly with that (other priest) to free him of the many errors that he had absorbed in his country because he saw in him a great profit because of the grace of God that illuminates him and of the reasons that he had recognized, and they would have made good on their reasons if he had not resolved to depart against their wishes and insistence, as they were motivated to do much more. However, he flees from talk of religious matters as he can, and he is also motivated by fear of losing his property in his homeland. For that reason, it is necessary to cultivate him in order to fully persuade him, with the divine assistance and the help of good and expert clergy, otherwise what has gained will be lost.

8. The Catalogue: Francesco Maria Orlandini's Appeal to Propaganda Fide (ASPF, SOCG 354, f. 236, 245)

This extraordinary document, cited at length in chapter 3, comes in the form of a request for transfer from one monastery to another, of which the Roman congregations and heads of the religious orders received thousands. In order to ingratiate himself with the members of Propaganda Fide and justify his request to be sent to Florence, Orlandini expressed his desire to 'employ the remainder of his years in the conversion of his relatives, of whom he has already brought many with divine favor onto the holy vessel of the holy mother church' and provided a list of the members of his family that he had already converted, and the extreme methods, including kidnapping, that he had used to do so. For this apparently zealous and militant convert from Judaism, there were no loyalties or considerations that could stand in the way of what he viewed as obedience to the dictates of the Gospels.

13 novembre 1662

Fra Francesco Maria Orlandini, fiorentino, Minore Conventuale Francescano, espone humilissimamente all'eminenze loro reverendissime haver egli già 20 anni sono portato all'aura dello spirito santo fatto passaggio dall'hebraismo, alla sacrosanta fede catholica, del qual tempo havendo speso parte nel fondar se stesso nella perfetta cognitione della christiana verità; desideroso poi di poter con l'evangelio [servo] moltiplicare i ricevuti talenti, ha sin qui impiegato il rimanente degl'anni in procurar la salute degli altri suoi congionti, de quali molti ha già condotti con il divino favore sotto il sacro vesillo di santa madre chiesa, nel di cui pietoso seno vivono tutti con religiosa exemplarità, per lo più nel claustro. Si come possono le eminenze loro conoscer dalle attestationi che qui anesse presenta, e meglio in voce possono accertarsene da Monsignor Nerli Arcivescovo di Firenze. E perche molti ne restano nell'hebraismo, la conversione de quali spera esser per riuscirli facile con la divina assistenza, acciò dunque possa con quiete e sicurezza maggiore impiegarsi in cosi pio esercitio, supplica humilmente le eminenze loro reverendissime a voler con particolar decreto dichiararlo per figlio del convento di Santa Croce di Fiorenza, nella qual città sono l'accenate creature cosi convertite come da convertirsi, e della quale egli medemo è nativo. Tanto più che è proprio costume nella conventual religione per lo più, che ciascheduno nel prendere in essa l'habito procuri la figliuolanza del convento di quella città o luogo di cui è nativo o del più vicino (non essendo ivi) Qual costume non sapendo il detto supplicante allhora che riceve l'habito religioso, si ridusse poi al tempo della professione ad esser aggregato ad un piccolo

conventino nelle campagne della romagna, dove non può esercitarsi in simili pii officii. Soggiunge di più esser in Fiorenza due dell'accennate creature hebree in prossima dispositione di venir alla nostra santa fede, ne altro si attende, che il ridursi egli con la supplicata figliuolanza in Fiorenza, et ivi sotto i felicissimi auspicii della protettione della sacra congregatione de propaganda fide impiegar il residuo della sua vita in procurar la salute di quei poveri infedeli. Protestandosi che oltre al premio che l'eminenze loro haveranno da SDM per cosi santa assistenza, resterà ancora il supplicante in obligo di pregare la divina clemenza ne suoi quotidiani sacrifitii per la salute, et esaltatione di cotesta sacra congregatione.

Qua deus

Nota delle creature estratte dall'hebraismo, et condotte alla fede cattolica da fra francesco maria orlandini sacerdote de minori conventuali di S. Francesco

In Fiorenza

Nel 1645/ Laura sorella carnale fanciulla di anni 18 cavata invitis parentibus dal ghetto a costo di una mortal ferita toccata in fianco egli da un suo fratello carnale in quella funtione. La fanciulla hoggi e' monaca velata professa nel monastero di santa chiara, si chiama s. anna maria felice

Nel 1650/ Lauda Dio Blanis figlio di un cugino del sopradetto, d'anni 17 hoggi professo ne monaci benedettini col nome di Francesco Maria Capponi

Nel 1651/ Laura nipote d'anni 15 hoggi stabilita nel monastero delle ancille della santissima vergine, dette le montalve, e si noma S.ra Maria Maddalena

In Livorno

Nel 1652/ Ester sua parente a longe, maritata d'anni 28 a persuasione del sudetto lasciato il marito la figlia e ogni sua facolta, superate le forti persecutioni de parenti si condusse al sacro fonte, e poi in Fiorenza, di dove parti per Pistoia, ove hoggi vive, maritata, e si chiama Vittoria felice

Nel 1654/ Chiara sorella carnale maritata di eta di anni 40 mentre giaceva

in letto infermo a persuasione del detto suo fratello convertita, fu dal medemo non ostanti le violenze degl'hebrei trasportata da quella casa, alla casa di una signora christiana, dove in letto per mano di quel proposito fu con gran sentimento di divotione, con le lacrime degl'astanti per tenerezza) battezzata e postoli il nome di caterina felice e doppo esser stata giorni 14 con incredibil patienza in letto, al fine aggravandosi l'infermità, nelle braccia del medemo fratello rese a Dio tutta lieta lo spirito.

In Fiorenza

Nel 1656/ Angelo suo nipote d'eta' d'anni 16 convertito, e battezzato, hoggi sta in santa maria nuova di firenze studente di cerusia e si noma Antonio Maria.

In Padova poi per lo spatio di due anni ha essercitato la carica di assistere e catechizzare i catecumeni de quali sei ha accompagnati al sacro fonte, due convertiti da lui.

In Firenze poi ha fatto il medemo, e sempre con pericolo della vita.

Translation :

November 13, 1662

Fra Francesco Maria Orlandini, a Florentine and a Minorite Conventual Friar, wishes to inform their most reverend eminences that twenty years ago he was brought by the aura of the holy spirit from Judaism to the sacrosanct Catholic faith and has spent part of the time since building a perfect understanding of Christian truth. Since he desired to multiply the talents he received, he used the remaining years to procure the salvation of his relatives, many of whom he has already brought with divine favor under the standard of the Holy Mother Church, in whose merciful breast they live with religious exemplarity, mostly enclosed in convents. Your eminencies can see this for yourselves by the certificates that he has attached to this letter, and they can also be heard in person from Monsignor Nerli Archbishop of Florence. Many of them remain in Judaism, and he hopes that they can be converted easily with divine assistance. In order to undertake such a pious labor with greater certainty and discretion, he begs that their most reverend eminences declare him by decree a son of the convent of Santa Croce in Florence, the city where the said persons, both those who have converted and those who have not yet done so, live and of which he himself is a native. Furthermore, it is custom in

the Conventual Franciscan order that every friar, upon taking vows, becomes a son of the convent in the city from whence he comes, or if there is not one there, of a nearby convent. Since the petitioner did not know of this custom at the time he joined the order, he was assigned at the time of his profession to the order to a small friary in the countryside of Romagna, where he is unable to undertake these duties. He adds that in Florence, two of the aforementioned Jews are intending to come soon to our holy faith. Nothing stands in the way of this but his arrival in Florence as a son of the convent, where under the felicitous auspices of the holy Congregation of Propaganda Fide he could use the rest of his life to procure the salvation of those poor infidels. He declares that beyond the reward which your Eminences will receive from His Divine Majesty for such holy assistance, the petitioner will pray for divine clemency in his daily sacrifices for the health and exaltation of this sacred congregation.

As God Wishes.

Note of the persons brought from Judaism, and to the Catholic faith, by fra Francesco Maria Orlandini priest of the conventual minorite friars of Saint Francis

In Florence

- In 1645, Laura, his sister by blood, a girl of eighteen years taken against her relatives' wishes from the ghetto, which cost him a mortal wound in his side given to him by his brother by blood. The girl is today a veiled nun in the monastery of Santa Chiara and is called Suor Anna Maria Felice.
- In 1650, Laudadio Blanis, his cousin's son, aged seventeen, today he is a professed monk of the Benedictine order named Francesco Maria Capponi.
- In 1651, Laura, his niece, aged fifteen, today living in the nunnery of the Lambs of the holy virgin, known as the Montalve, named Suor Maria Maddalena.

In Livorno

- In 1652, Ester, a distant relative, married, who at twenty-eight years of age he persuaded to abandon her husband and daughter and every possession. Once the persecution of her relatives were overcome, she was brought to the sacred font, and then to Florence, from where she departed for Pistoia, where she lives today, married, and is called

Vittoria Felice.

In 1654, Chiara, his sister by blood, forty years old and married, was persuaded by her brother to convert while she lay sick in bed. She was brought away from that house despite the violence of the Jews, to the home of a Christian lady, where she was baptized in bed while those present showed great sentiment and devotion and shed tears of tenderness. She was given the name Caterina Felice and after she lay fourteen days in bed with incredible suffering, at the end, her malady worsened and in her brother's arms she joyously gave forth her spirit to God.

In Florence

In 1656, Angelo, his sixteen-year-old nephew, converted and was baptized. Today he is a student of surgery at the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence and is named Antonio Maria.

In Padua, for two years he had the duty of assisting and catechizing catechumens, six of whom he brought to the sacred font and two of whom he converted.

Later in Florence, he did the same at continuous risk of his life.

9. A Soldier's Lament: Anton Heidman's Request to Domenico de' Melani, 1691 (ASF, Ospizio dei Melani 57, Unnumbered)

This letter, sent by a Saxon cavalry officer to his patron Domenico de' Melani (a Florentine-born castrato singer resident for many years at the electoral court, see pp. 55–6), contains a life story that reflects many of the themes discussed in chapter 5. After an upbringing in a military family and an unsuccessful marriage, Heidman joined the cavalry as a way to escape the oppression of his wife and father-in-law, taking with him a large sum of money from the family-owned business that he used to purchase a commission. After serving in campaigns across Eastern and Central Europe, he found himself in Rome (a city he calls 'the mother of all faithful Christians'), where he took refuge after a duel and became a Catholic. Like those of many other soldiers, Heidman's highly engaging and dramatic self-portrait raises many questions about the true motives of its author but nevertheless indicates some of the many ways in which the violent, itinerant lives of soldiers could lead them to conversion.

Illustrissimo Signor Mio

Non obstante che mai io ho potuto maginarmi l'ardire d'incommodargli, me da pero occasione, il grand splendore della di lei sublime carità e pietà che usa tanto per l'assistenza ai poveri sconsolati, come il grand zelo che ha, per la salvatione delle povere anime, il che si fa vedere e sentire, tanto in fiorenza, quanto in altri luoghi d'Italia, cosi che in consideratione di questo, … persuade non mi imponera per malo, se io tengo incommodargli per la presente a confidargli come adesso cattolico Romano, certi miei negotii e essendo grandissimo di bisogno che mi do a conoscer chi io sono, ha da sapere Vostra Signoria che sono un figlio di Heinrich Heidman, ch'era mercante di specieria et habitava nella [illegible] in mezzo del signor Hauscheller, e la vedova Fischer, qual Heinrich Heidmann era figliastro di Colonello Klöster chiamato … et io fece mercantia in Leipzig, dove ero maritato con una figlia del signor Christian Krugerman, Giubiliero in detta città con qual mia moglie, del principio del matrimonio, fin incirca in tre anni, nonobstante i tanti rimedij che ha cercato pero non solo … ho potuto vivere in pace e buona corrispondenza ma di più delli loro parenti (e principalmente del padre) senza mai haver potuto saperne la causa, ho havuto tanta persecutione, e sminumento del mio credito fin d'esser ridotto in stato, dove, per non andar igniosamente nel …, e mentre ch'il proprio Padre della mia moglie per sminuirmi il mio credito tanto più, spesse volte apertamente haveva detto, che conoscendomi nel più grand pericolo di cascare, e che potendomi conservarne con un solo talero, che pero mai vorrebbe farlo, io non potevo consolarmi d'altro rimedio che di salvarmi con un fallimento, pigliando con mi tre mille taleri, per mezo di quali io andava in fiandra, dove ottenne titolo di capitano di cavalleria, di che pero doppo d'un anno mi ritornai in Sassonia, dove sotto mano io cercava si fosse possibile di poter in qualche cosa rimediare, ma havendo l'informatione che quel che io havevi lasciato male, altri havevanno ridotto in peggio (il quale per non accender fuoco nuovo e' meglio passar per adesso in silentio) e che quelli che il più mi persecutavano era la mia moglie, e suoi adherenti, cosi che conoscendo di non poter fare niente, mi parti la seconda volta, andando a Praga, Pologna, Moravia, Wiena, e a Roma, poi di Roma a Livorno, dove servì al grand Duca, con titolo di capitan riformato 26 mese, d'onde per esser all'hora comminciata la guerra in Hongria, mi risolsi di nuovo d'andare nell'Imperio, a servire contro il Turco, dove passando per il stato di Milano, mi fece persuader di restarvi, dove mi sono trattenuto, con il nome di capitano riformato, e in carico di maggiordomo, nella casa del thenente general [Conte] de Stadtungh, cosi che sono restato in stato di Milano incirca sei anni, e fin al anno passato, dove cominciandosi da laborare in campagna il mio thenente general mi fece il suo capitano thenente della sua compagnia qual posto ho

goduto con ogni sodisfattione, fin al 2 Agosto prossimo passato, dove per una disgratiata disfida, di nuovo era obligato ritirarmi, et havendo preso il mio ricorso, a Roma (come madre di tutti fedeli Christiani) dove per essermi convertito alla santa fede cattolica, giorni sono ho fatto l'essercitio spirituale, per il quale io ho conosciuto gli tanti pericoli, ne quali (signor iddio non fosse stato tanto misericordioso) tante volte m'ho trovato di perder la mia anima, e che ho conosciuto come in questi correnti tempi, più non si puol servire, senza machiar la consienza, e cumulare (per tanti invalide e sacrilegi confessione) sempre peccati [†], mi sono risolto, (si possibile sarà) giocare il securo con far mi religioso, come gia mi è promesso, del venerabile padre comissario delli francescani scalzi d'accettarmi, si però io posso ottenere le dispense delle difficulta che v'intranno, delli quali non sono gli minimi, di poter mostrare il mio testimonio Baptesimale, come ancora l'autentica rinuntia della mia moglie, dove per mancanza d'amici, a' quali principalmente in questo punto, io non posso fidarmi, ho (con consiglio di buoni religiosi) preso la liberta di scriver e supplicare a Vostra Signoria d'usar tanta carità di farmi fare il testimonio baptesimale, il che, per haverlo tanto più facilmente s'avisa, ch'io sono nato nell'anno 1650, e Baptizato nella chiesa di santa croce in Dresden, in circa nelli primi giorni di Maggio, ch'era 15 giorni in circa doppo la Pentecosa: e perche sono già incirca 12 anni, che io sono via della mia moglie, della quale non obstante di tante quantità di lettere, e offerti fatti, che io ho scritto e continuamente scrivo, e m'asserisco, tanto a ella quanto alli suoi parenti, però mai ho hauto, risposta nisciuna eccetta una ch'in in circa quattro anni sono me scrisse la mia moglie, e nella quale non solo negava di sottoscriversi come moglie, cioè con il mio nome che ha havuto di me e come in Sassonia s'usa, ma di più mi rinunziava apertamente di non voler più saper più niente di me, e che non mi conosceva più per il suo marito, pigliandosi di più l'authorità d'adscriversi un potere più grande che non hanno gli stessi sacerdoti, cioè di volere solvere, e dispensare gli sacramenti, dicendome nella sua lettera, come mi dà ogni libertà di cercare la mia fortuna ancora in maritarmi, declarandosi chiaramente, di mai farmi il minimo impedimento e essendo il più difficile punto d'haver la sua rinunzai sarebbe supplicare medesimamente a Vostra Signoria si la potesse far la parlare di qualche amici trattando della mia persona, e che perseverando nella sua ostinatione, ancora se ne potesse havere l'autentico testimonio, con gli testi, che in tal caso si requirino, et havendo questo non dubitarò che di sua santità io ottenero ogni altra dispensa necessaria, il qual favore s'in altra maniera io non posso ricompensarlo senza la gratia che per tal opera havera da ricevere di nostro signore lo ricompensarò con la mia divota oratione, appo gli santi sepulchri e si Iddio mi concederà la gratia nell'offerta del suo santissimo figlio, per la conservatione della persona di Vostra Signoria, cui commandi sempre io starò aspettando, e agli quali mi

sottometto, pregando in havendo ottenuti gli detti testimoni si compiace mandarle al medesimo padre, il quale l'ha fatto capitare la presente lettera, che cosi gia mi è capitata in mani, che basciando humilmente gli mani resto di Vostra Signoria Illustrissima humile e divotissimo servo, Roma 20 Ottobre 1691, Antonio Heidman Capitano Thenente di Cavalleria

P.S. Aviso che la sua santità va megliorandosi, sperando ch'in breve comminciara a consolar di nuovo il popolo con la solita sua udienza publica

P.S. havesse scritto ancora alla propia mia moglie, che pero per haverla scritta nel mese di Marzo l'ho tralasciato per adesso a posto.

Translation :

Most Illustrious Lord

Though I never imagined I would dare disturb you, I am motivated by the great splendor of the sublime piety and charity that you display in helping the poor and disconsolate, and the great zeal that you possess for the salvation of poor souls, which can be seen and heard both in Florence and in other places in Italy. I am thus persuaded that you will not disdain me if I disturb you with this letter and confide in you, as I am in dire need. Your Lordship must know that I am a son of Heinrich Heidmann, who was a pharmacist and lived in … with signor Hauscheller and the widow Fischer. Heinrich Heidmann was the stepson of Colonel Klöster … and I sold merchandise in Leipzig, where I was married to a daughter of Christian Krugerman, jeweler in that city. Despite all of the remedies that were used, I was never able to live in peace and harmony with my wife, from three years after the beginning of the marriage … Furthermore, I was much persecuted and discredited by their relatives, and principally those of the father, without ever being able to understand why.... I was reduced in such a state that, in order to avoid … And my wife's own father, in order to discredit me further, many times said openly that I was in danger of ruin and that even if he could save me with just one taler, he would still never do it. I could find no other remedy than to save myself by declaring bankruptcy, taking with me three thousand talers, which I used to travel to Flanders, where I obtained the title of captain of cavalry. However, after a year, I returned to Saxony where I carefully attempted to see if it were possible to fix things, but I learned that what I had left badly had been worsened by others (and in order to avoid starting new trouble it's better to remain in silence about this) and those that persecuted me the most were my wife and her followers. Knowing that I could do nothing, I departed a second time and

went to Prague, Poland, Moravia, Vienna, and Rome, and from Rome to Livorno, where I served the grand duke with the title of reformed captain for twenty-six months. When the war in Hungary began, I resolved to go back to the Empire to serve against the Turk, but when I passed through the state of Milan, I decided to remain there. I stayed there in the house of the lieutenant general Count of Ungvar[5] as a majordomo with the title of reformed captain, and I remained in Milan for around six years, until last year. When my lieutenant general began to work in the countryside, he named me lieutenant captain of his company, a position that I enjoyed with all satisfaction until last August 2, when due to a shameful duel, I was forced to retire. I took refuge in Rome (as the mother of all Christian faithful), where having converted to the holy Catholic faith, a few days ago I did the spiritual exercises and through them I learned (if God had not been so merciful) the many perils in which I risked losing my soul many times. I learned that in the present times one cannot serve with staining one's soul and accumulating still more sins (through many invalid and sacrilegious confessions). I therefore resolved (if it is possible) to play it safe by becoming a monk. I have already been promised acceptance by the venerable father commissioner of the discalced Franciscans, so long as I am able to obtain dispensation for the difficulties that stand in the way, which are not insignificant, to be able to show my baptismal certificate, as well as an authentication of my renunciation of my wife. Yet because I lack friends that I can trust in these matters, I have (at the advice of good clergymen) taken the liberty to write and beg your Lordship to do me the favor of obtaining a certificate of baptism for me. In order to obtain it more easily, you should be advised that I was born in the year 1650 and baptized in the church of the Holy Cross in Dresden, in one of the early days in May, around fifteen days after Pentecost. And I have been away from my wife for around twelve years now, and despite the many letters and offers that I have sent and still send to her and her relatives, I have never received a response, with the exception of one time around four years ago when she wrote to me, neglecting to use my last name as is custom in Saxony, and openly renounced me, saying that she wanted to know nothing more of me and that she did not recognize me as her husband. She granted herself an authority greater than that of a priest to dissolve and dispense the sacraments by saying in her letter that she gave me every liberty to seek my fortune again in marriage and declaring openly that she would never create the slightest impediment. Since the most difficult point is having her renunciation I supplicate your Lordship all the same to have her speak with some friends about me, and if she perseveres in her obstinacy, to have a document drawn up before witnesses, as is required in these cases. If I am able have this, I do not doubt that I will be able to have all of the other necessary dispensations from His Holiness. If I cannot compensate

you in any other way for this favour than the grace that you will receive for this good work from the Lord, I will repay you with my devoted prayer at the sacred tombs. And if God will grant me his grace in the offering of his most holy son for the conservation of your Lordship, whose commands I shall always await and to whom I submit myself, I beg that once you have obtained the said documents, you will be pleased to give them to the same priest who has given you this letter, just as it came into my hands. I remain the most devoted and humble servant of your Lordship, humbly kissing your hands.

Rome, October 20, 1691

Antonio Heidman, Lieutenant Captain of Cavalry

P.S. I inform you that His Holiness is improving, and I hope that he will soon begin to console the populace again with his usual public audience.

P.S. I wrote again to my wife, but having written to her already in the month of March, I intentionally omitted it.

Notes

1Federico Rozzoni and Gabriele Pionnio, the first administrators of the Collegio de' Neofiti in Milan.
2Matthew 16:19
3Refers to Luther's 1528 *Letter to Two Pastors on Anabaptism*, *Luthers Werke* 40: 229–62.
4John 14:28
5The city today called Uzhhorod, in Western Ukraine, on the border with Hungary.

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